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THE
BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS ONLY,
AND THE
Particular Communion
OF
THE BAPTIST CHURCHES,
EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED.

IN THREE PARTS.

THE FIRST—PUBLISHED ORIGINALLY IN 1789;

THE SECOND—IN 1794;

THE THIRD—AN *APPENDIX*, CONTAINING ADDITIONAL
OBSERVATIONS AND ARGUMENTS, WITH STRICTURES ON
SEVERAL LATE PUBLICATIONS.

BY THOMAS BALDWIN.

This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.

JOHN.

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PART I.

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SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE first of these *Traacts* was written while the author resided in the State of New Hampshire, by the particular request of the Woodstock Association.\* Without designing to enter the wide field of controversy, a few thoughts were hastily collected, rather as an apology for the *particular communion* of the Baptists, than an intended attack upon the sentiments and practice of others. The substance of what was then written, was presented to the above Association, at their meeting at Marlow, in the autumn of 1788, and published the spring following.

In 1791 the Rev. *Noah Worcester*, pastor of the Congregational church in *Thornton*, published a reply, entitled, "*A Friendly Letter*," &c. addressed to the author. This Letter, though written with a considerable degree of Christian candour, contained some misrepresentations and errors, which it was thought desirable to have corrected. Accordingly, in 1794 the second *Traact* was presented to the public, in the form of a "Reply" to the foregoing Letter. A second edition was called for in a few weeks; and a third was some time after published in Connecticut. The repeated calls for this work, rendered its republication necessary.

The controversy had considerably subsided, particularly on the side of the Baptists, as very few things had been published by them for the space of ten years; till at length Mr. Edwards's "*Candid Reasons* (as he is pleased to call them) for renouncing the principles of the Antipædobaptists," reached this country. They were immediately reprinted, and distributed in all directions. This book acquired peculiar celebrity, on the account of its coming from one who had been a professed Baptist. It was supposed, that he understood the *secret*, wherein our *great strength lay*, and would consequently be more likely to embarrass our arguments than any other man.

What is now offered to the public in the following pages, as an *Appendix*, was at first designed only to contain remarks on this author. But finding the controversy renewed

\* Composed of Baptist churches in New Hampshire and Vermont.

by our Pædobaptist brethren with uncommon zeal, and in some instances with an acrimony which but little becomes those who profess to contend for the truth, it was thought proper to extend our observations to those articles which form the "ground work" of infant baptism. The membership of infants, as founded in the covenant of circumcision, and the sameness of the Jewish and Christian churches, are the principal data from which Pædobaptism is argued; these have therefore received particular consideration.

The reader will perceive, that our strictures on Mr. Edwards have been directed to those arguments only, which he considered as principal in this dispute. Our limits would not allow us to attend to any thing more. It has not been our design to speak disrespectfully of the man: to his own Master he must stand or fall.

Two Discourses of the Rev. Samuel Worcester, have also received our animadversions. His arguments being in *substance* the same with those of Mr. Edwards, it was deemed unnecessary to go over the ground again. As these discourses were designed not only to strengthen and support Pædobaptism, but to pull down and bring into disrepute the sentiments of his Baptist neighbours, who dwell peaceably by him, we make no apology for attempting to prove his misstatements and misrepresentations. We must be permitted, however, to say, we have aimed to be candid, and to treat his person with due respect, whilst we have freely censured his errors.

Two Discourses by the Rev. Dr. Osgood have also been briefly noticed. These are written in the Doctors usual style of elegance and perspicuity, and contain several very candid observations. A few inconsistencies have however been noticed; and there are some other things which we think highly reprehensible, such as his comparing the Baptist ministers to the *devil*! and charging them with *creeping into men's houses*! &c. (page 33.) It is conceived that a man never *creeps* into another's house, when he is honourably invited.

The whole is with great deference submitted to a candid public. The author would sincerely unite with the pious of all denominations, in fervent prayer to Almighty God, for an increase of spiritual light, love, and knowledge, until error and prejudice shall be exterminated, and all Christians be of *one heart and one mind* to serve the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

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# Open Communion examined.

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## SECTION I.

*Remarks on the unfriendly Aspersions cast upon the Baptists, for refusing Communion with other Denominations—The Gospel Doctrine of a Church and Qualification of the Members—With Strictures on Baptism.*

THE Baptist churches in general have long been blamed for holding and practising what is commonly called *close communion*, as if this practice were wholly inconsistent with *Christian charity*, or that *mutual forbearance* which the gospel requires : and by some it is considered as incompatible with the existence of grace, and for which we have been loaded with many reproachful names.

We are charged with making the want of a *little water only*, a *bar to communion* ; and that we are so superstitiously fond of the *watery element*, that we place the whole of our religion in what they call a mere *circumstance* of the *ordinance of baptism* : and some even assert, that we hold that none can be *saved* without being *immersed*. And that thereby we put *baptism* in the place of *redeeming blood*.

But why such unfriendly charges ? Surely they greatly impeach our doctrinal *principles*, and are perfectly inconsistent with our avowed *sentiments* and constant *practice*.

For it is too notorious to admit a plea of ignorance, in any of our opponents, that we consider no one as a proper subject of baptism, who does not profess *repentance* towards God, and *faith* in our Lord Jesus Christ ; who does not, in other words, appear to be in a state of *salvation*.

Nay, so far from making baptism a *saving* ordinance, we do not, we cannot, consider any one as a proper subject of it, who looks upon it in that light.

But, however, we desire to pay a proper deference to that, as well as to all other of Christ's institutions ; and not to treat it as though it were left to our choice, either to practise or omit it : although we do not consider it as *essential to salvation*, yet we do think it *essential* to the regular visibility of a gospel church ; and consequently to communion at the Lord's table ; for that is a church ordinance, and ought never to be administered but to members that are in special covenant.

I am persuaded that the Baptists are not the only people who believe baptism to be a *pre-requisite* to the Lord's supper.

Were a Turk to be brought from *Mecca* to America, and should here be convinced of the imposture of Mahomet, and become a true convert to Christianity : should he immediately after attend a Pædobaptist church, on one of their stated seasons to celebrate the Lord's supper ; and should the solemnity and beauty of the ordinance attract his mind, and excite in him ardent desires to partake in it ; would they permit him ? I am persuaded they would not. But why would they not receive him ? Is it because



they do not look upon him as a Christian ? No, for they really do. But do they not believe God has *received* him ? Yes, they do. But do they not believe Christ *communes* with him *spiritually* ? They do. How can they then *shut him out* ? Doubtless, because they view him to be unbaptized, and not a member of any church. Their conduct in refusing him, would be consistent with the tenderest feelings of Christianity. Therefore we do not commune merely as *Christians*, but as such in a *regular, visible standing*.

But to illustrate the point further, suppose a minister of Christ was providentially in one of our new settlements where were a number of inhabitants, respectable on other accounts, but who had never been *baptized in their infancy*, nor had any church been gathered in the place—he is invited to preach—his labours are so far succeeded, that in a few days considerable numbers are hopefully brought to the *knowledge of the truth*—the next Lord's day they desire him to *break bread* to them. What will he do ? If *free communion* is to be established, here is a good opportunity for it to operate in its fullest latitude : for if it be lawful and right to break bread to one that is unbaptized, it may be to a whole society. But, however, if he be a *Pædobaptist minister*, I presume he will not be guilty of such an *irregularity* : nor would a *consistent Baptist*. And I feel safe to conclude, that our *Pædobaptist brethren* would not blame us for refusing communion with such a society, who did not submit to baptism in some *mode or other*, however amiable their Christian characters might appear in other respects.

If they would acquit us from *blame* in the foregoing instance, why should they *fault* us for refusing communion with those that we verily believe have never been *baptized* according to Christ's institution : for, agreeably to an ancient writer, " They who are not rightly baptized, are, doubtless, not baptized at all."\* Wherefore we conclude, that communion does not belong to Christians merely as such, but to them as baptized members of some gospel church.

Neither yet should we be quite safe to open our doors for communion, to all who are in a church state, and profess to be baptized.

Therefore, it will be necessary in the next place, to attend to the *scripture* account of the  
*Faith and Order of a Gospel Church.*

A gospel church must be built upon a gospel plan. If we candidly look into the scriptures, we shall easily perceive, that the church is a society of saints, of faithful men and women in Christ Jesus, that are joined together in holy fellowship, that are incorporated into a visible church state, and by agreement meet together to carry on the worship of God, to glorify him, and edify one another.

The church does not appear to be national, provincial, or parochial ; but truly congregational. It is not built of dead materials, but of *lively stones* ;† each of them fitted before they are laid in the building, " so that there is neither hammer nor axe heard in all the house while it is in building : "‡ how wonderful ! how

\* Baptisum quomodo non habeant sine dubio non habent. Tertull. de baptismo, cap. xi. page 230.

† 1 Pet. ii. 5. ‡ 1 Kings vi. 7.

superb ! and yet how exact the model, so that there needed no alteration to bring them all together with that *exactness*, that *bone* comes to its *bone*.

The church is called by St. Paul, “ The pillar and ground of the truth.”\*

The gospel rule gives none a right in the church of Christ, but true believers : *and all that enter not in by Christ the door, are thieves and robbers.*

The church is Christ’s mystical body, which he hath *loved* and *given* himself for, “ that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the *washing of water by the word.*”†

If we wish to understand the apostolick form of a gospel church, we must expect to find it in the Acts of the apostles, or some of their writings. The first gospel church that was gathered after the *ascension* of the *Messiah*, was that at Jerusalem, which is described in the following order : “ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized ; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls : and they continued *stedfastly* in the *apostles’ doctrine and fellowship.*”‡

When *Ananias*, with *Sapphira* his wife, came and lied to the Holy Ghost, and pretended they were *friends* to Christ, when they were not, and were both fallen *dead* ; great fear fell upon the attending multitude. “ *And of the rest durst no man join himself unto them.*” (That is, such as they were, carnal, hypocritical professors.) “ But *believers* were the more added unto the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.”§ So early

\* 1 Tim. iii. 15. † Eph. v. 26. ‡ Acts ii. 41, 42. § Acts v.



did false pretenders try to get a place in the church of Christ.

This church at Jerusalem being gathered under the *inspiration* of the *Holy Ghost*, may be considered as a *model* for all succeeding ones ; every circumstance related concerning it, discovers it to be a body of true believers in Christ.

The next church gathered by the apostles was that at *Samaria*, which exactly agrees with that at *Jerusalem*—"When they *believed* Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were *baptized*, both men and women."†

The church of *Corinth* also appears to be in the same *method* ; "Many of the Corinthians *hearing, believed, and were baptized*."‡ The church at *Ephesus* was addressed by the *apostle*, as "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus ;" and as those who had been *raised* from the *dead*, and *quicken*ed by *sovereign grace*, turned from the course of this world, delivered from the *spirit* that *worketh* in the *children of disobedience*. The Corinthians "first gave their own selves unto the Lord, and unto one another by the *will* of God."\* And none can, in a gospel sense, give themselves up in church covenant, till they previously give themselves to the Lord.

I think that no one that is indebted to the New Testament for his knowledge respecting a *gospel church*, will try to gainsay the foregoing description.

Therefore I would observe, that if the foregoing description be a scriptural representation of a gospel church ; then consequently, that church which does not agree thereto, is not strictly upon

\* Acts viii. 12.    † Acts xviii. 8.    ‡ 2 Cor. viii. 5.

the gospel *plan*, unless it can be proved, that there are two modes of gospel churches.

That there may be churches formed, that in many particulars may resemble a gospel church, I wish not to deny ;—and that in those churches there may be many real Christians, is a matter I have no desire to scruple : so I have reason to suppose that there are many Christians, not united to any church.

Again, the Christian church is built on Christ's *authority*, and is supported and defended by the *same* : He is the *chief corner stone*, on which their spiritual building is erected, “disallowed indeed of men ; but chosen of God, and precious. Therefore, that church that is built on worldly *establishments*, and depends on *civil aid* for its support and defence, is not strictly conformed to the gospel *plan*.”

Ezra, who led the people out of Babylon, refused to ask aid of the civil arm, to assist him against the enemies in the way, saying, “I was ashamed to require of the *king* a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemies in the way : because we had spoken to the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him : but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.”\*

Christ's “kingdom is not of this *world* :”† and in a religious *sense* is not connected with, nor any ways dependent thereon for its *being* or *support*.

It will doubtless be granted, that there are many churches in the land, that are not formed according to the foregoing *method*, as may be made evident, and will appear in the following

\* Ezra viii. 22. † John xviii. 36.

particulars, i. e. That a *heart belief*, or *saving faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, is not considered by many of them as a *pre-requisite* to baptism, or to their being admitted in full communion ! which does not agree with the truly apostolic rule. Philip's words to the Eunuch who desired to submit himself to the ordinance of baptism, were, " If thou *believest with all thine heart*, thou mayest."\* Philip was directed to this chariot by the *Spirit of God*, and must be considered as acting under the influence of *that* through the whole transaction : and if he required any thing more of the *Ethiopian* convert, than what was *necessary, really necessary* to that ordinance, it would discover a degree of *partiality* which few would be willing to admit, considering the influence he acted under. That this was not the case is evident from St. Paul's words, " with the *heart* man *believeth* unto righteousness, and with the mouth *confession* is made unto *salvation*."† This *heart belief* is the only *belief* that is unto righteousness, and this must precede a confession with the mouth, if not the confession will be but a *falsehood*.

Again, Many of the *Pædobaptists* hold the covenant made with *Abraham*, called by Stephen " *the covenant of circumcision*," to be the covenant of *grace*.‡ From hence they infer the right of infant membership ; and consider the natural seed of believers as the children of *Abraham* ; and on this ground claim the special privileges of the gospel for them as such.

This rather differs from *Paul's* idea, who tells us, " the promise—was not to *Abraham* nor to his *seed* through the *law*, but through the *right-*

\* Acts viii. 37. † Rom. x. 10. ‡ Acts vii. 8.



*eousness of faith.* Therefore it is of *faith*, that it might be by *grace*, to the end the promise might be sure to all the *seed*.\* “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s *seed*, and heirs according to the promise.”† Hence we may infer, that if we be not Christ’s, then we are not Abraham’s *seed*, and are not heirs according to the *promise*.

Again, The apostle *Peter* calls the members of the Christian church, “an holy priest-hood, to offer up *spiritual* sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;”‡ which no *carpal professor* can do; neither can men in their *natural state*, for “*spiritual things* are foolishness to them;” but the children of God are “an *holy nation*, a *peculiar people*, to shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of *darkness* into his marvellous *light*.” Can we by this description find the features of an *infant* in his *natural state*? or do they not rather resemble true *believers* in Christ. But it is further added, “which in time past were not a *people*, but are now the *people* of God, which had not obtained *mercy*, but now have obtained *mercy*.”

But how will this agree with the notion of *infants being born* with an *hereditary right* to the special ordinances of the gospel? If it be true that they have a *right*, then there is no time when they are not a *people* after they are born into the world: and that they obtained *mercy* in the same way that *Levi paid tithes*, i. e. in the *loins of his father*. Upon this scale, that parents convey a *right* of church privileges to their *infant seed*, I cannot see why they do not hold their church privileges by the same *tenure* as they hold their *lands*.

\* Rom. iv. 13—16. † Gal. iii. 29. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 5—9.

But perhaps it may be thought I am trying to expose a *sentiment* that the *Pædobaptists* do not hold, i. e. that *grace* is *essential* to church membership ; however, one of two things is evident by their practice, either 1st. That *grace* is *conveyed* as above described ; or 2d. That *grace* is not *essential* to church membership. To suppose the former, would *superfede* the necessity of regeneration—to suppose the latter, would be to lay the foundation for a *graceless church* ; and would leave no other difference between *that* and the *world*, than what consists merely in *name* and *external form*.

If what has been observed already from the last will and testament of our Lord be true, it must sufficiently appear, that evidences of *grace* are absolutely *necessary* to the admission of a member to church fellowship or special ordinances.

At a certain time our Lord inquired of his disciples, whom men said that he was. After a relation of the different opinions of others, Peter believingly affirms, “THOU ART THE CHRIST THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon-barjona, for *flesh* and *blood* hath not *revealed* it unto thee, but my *Father* which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, thou art Peter ; and upon this ROCK I will *build* my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”\*

Churches in general, of all denominations, improve this *declaration* as a promise in their favour. But to determine the propriety of the *claim*, it is necessary to consider two things, 1st.

\* Matt. xvi. 13—19.

What we are to understand by the *Rock*. 2d. The manner of the building upon it.

Now, should we build upon another rock instead of that referred to by our Lord, it would naturally seclude us from the *promise*.

Again, Should we build and lay the true Rock as our foundation, but at the same time should not attend to the manner of building as described by Christ, we might still be left without any just right to the promise. Therefore I would here observe, that Christians in general (Papists excepted) acknowledge this rock to refer to Christ. But should the reader think I take something for granted that is not proved, let him consult the following scriptures, Isaiah xxviii. 16. *Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.* 2 Sam. xxi. 2. *The Lord is my rock.* Again in the 32d verse, *Who is a rock save our God.* Also, see 1 Sam. ii. 2. *Neither is there any rock like our God.* Again, 1 Cor. iii. 11. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST.* The apostle speaking of the household of God, says, *They are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone :* Eph. ii. 20.

By the above quotations it is made evident, that this *Rock* on which the church of Christ is built, is Christ himself, who is the “*root and offspring of David, the bright and the morning star.*” This is the *Rock* implied in *Peter’s* confession.

But let us observe in the next place the manner of the building to be erected on this Rock. A profession of faith, in adults, in order to their admission to special communion, is a point gen.



erally acknowledged : but if this be the only idea that is to be taken—that they stand in the aisle, and give their tacit consent to the *articles* and *covenant* read ; consenting to subject themselves to the rules of any particular church : if this be all that is pleaded for as necessary to the building of the church of Christ, I shall take leave to demur. For most persons that have been educated in the theory of the Christian religion could subscribe to this *implicit faith* : but those members that are fit materials for this spiritual building, make a confession in substance as Peter did ; and this springs from a Christ revealed in them ; “ *flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.*” Without such a revelation as this, no person can be a fit member for a gospel church ; neither can they get upon this *rock* without it : for until this is made to their souls, they neither know God nor Jesus Christ ; for it is expressly declared by Christ, Mat. xi. 27, *No man knoweth the Son but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* And if they do not know Christ, they are not his *sheep* : for he says, John x. 14, *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.* Now if they are not Christ’s *sheep*, what right have they in his *fold*. Christ fixes a saving issue upon coming to him, hearing his sayings, and doing them : Mat. vi. 47. And it is said, John vi. 44, *No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him :* This is the man that digs deep and lays his foundation (*by faith and repentance*) upon this blessed ROCK.

For the present let us view the matter in a different light : if the *divine rule* will admit of

one unregenerate person's being received as a *proper member* of a gospel church, it will of *two* ; and if of two, it will of *ten* ; and so consequently there may be a whole church and not a true believer in it ; but would any one dare to call such a society of people, a church of Christ ? Would it not rather resemble a *synagogue of Satan* ? But perhaps it will be objected, that it is not likely such an instance ever will take place ; surely there is nothing but *divine interposition* to *hinder* it, if this method is allowed to be *rule-able*.

But it may be further objected, that a *perfect* church is not to be expected in this imperfect state. To which I answer, the *divine rule* requires that *they* be *perfect* : Mat. v. 48. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Heb. xiii. 21. The question is not, whether, after all, we shall not have some *hypocrites*, or *unregenerate* persons in the church ; but whether we may knowingly receive such, or otherwise receive them that give no *evidence* to the contrary.

Now it will be readily granted that the *divine rule* requires every Christian to be *perfect*. But what if some should say, We do not expect Christians to be perfect, and so should take liberty to *indulge* themselves in *sin* ; could the *divine rule* be plead in their favour ? Would it not rather stare them in the face ? Equally so does the *gospel rule* every *carnal* and *hypocritical professor*.

But it may be further objected that it is the duty of every person to attend to all the externals of religion, as means which God has appointed for their conversion. To which I answer, it is the duty of every rational creature

*immediately to love God, and that perfectly as Gabriel does ; for without a principle of real love to God, the sinner cannot perform any Christian duty. Short of this, his duties are like a dead corpse without a spirit : For the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart : 1 Tim. i. 5.*

If the gospel directs the sinner to a progressive use of *means* or *ordinances*, in order to his *conversion*, then it does not require him immediately to *believe*, or to exercise evangelical *repentance* : means always precede the *end* for which they were designed. But is it not plain that every *duty* which the *law* or *gospel* requires of any creature, it requires it to be done from a *principle* of supreme *love* to God ; and without that, all his pretensions to duty are but hypocrisy. Prayer, or reading of God's word, attending to the word preached, and special ordinances (in an orderly way) are duties held up before every person : but they are required to attend them with penitent hearts. If the sinner attempts to pray with a heart of impenitency and unbelief, he does but deceive himself and mock God : for his motives cannot spring from a higher *source* than that which *rules his heart*, which is *self-love*. If he attends divine service, and imagines he has been worshipping God, he does but *deceive himself* : for they that *worship God, worship him in spirit and in truth* ; whilst this inscription might be justly written upon his most refined acts of *devotion*, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Should he be sprinkled from the baptismal laver, or *immersed* in Jordan's swelling flood, it would avail him nothing without a new *heart*. Should he come to the sacred table of our Lord, and receive the outward elements,



yet still he does not commune with *Christ* ; for *Christ* is light, and he is darkness, and they have no communion together.

That the proclamation of the gospel is to be made in the ears of sinners, will be readily granted ; and wherever it comes, it makes a demand for the sinner immediately to surrender his heart. His refusal is criminal, and lays him under *condemnation* : John iii. 18. But that the gospel invites impenitents, while such, to partake of its special ordinances, I choose rather to deny ; for unto the wicked God saith, *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth ?* Psal. L. 16. But it may be possible that some may object, that I hereby excuse the sinner from attempting any duty, because he has not love to God : I am far from making excuses for impenitents, but would rather show them their inexcusableness. Should the question be asked me, Whether it be the duty of a sinner to pray, I should readily answer, Yes ; and add, that he must pray *in faith* ; for *whatsoever is not of faith is sin* : Rom. xiv. 23. *And without faith it is impossible to please God* : Heb. xi. 6. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed* : Rom. x. 14. I can see no valuable end answered to the Redeemer's cause, or to the souls of men, either by urging or receiving unregenerate sinners into the church. If they can be persuaded that they are *doing* something that is acceptable to God as the *matter* of their duty, this may afford their consciences a temporary relief, and may be the means of their delaying to embrace that which alone can prove the salvation of their souls.

Should one of the servants of Christ be called to visit a dying person, on entering the room should discover that *death* was just ready to receive him in his icy arms—that he was past hope of recovery. The *crisis is important*—a few minutes will decide his *case for eternity* ! The dying man fixes ghastly eyes upon him, as a *master* in Israel, and expects some directions from him, while with a faltering tongue he thus relates his sad case ; *I am a poor undone sinner, just going into eternity, and have no evidence of an interest in Christ ! What shall I DO ?* Will the faithful minister now tell him, he must attend the use of *means*, as God's appointment for his conversion ? Will he direct him to receive *baptism*, or to *join* to the church, or receive the sacred supper ? all which he may *do* and yet be damned : or will he not rather adopt St. Paul's directions to the jailer, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved* : Acts xvi. 31. And tell him, if he *believeth not, he shall die in his sins* : John viii. 24. It will undoubtedly be granted, that the last mentioned is safest for the dying man ; if so, it is also safest for living men ; for living men are all dying men ! and we know not which will die first, either the *sick* or the *well* ! Therefore, we ought ever to give such directions to sinners at all times, as would be safe to give them when on a *dying bed*.

Having taken this brief survey of the gospel *doctrine* relative to the character of God's professing people, and the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, we find this to be the account : That those who had been so taught as to understand the doctrine of the *cross*, and so *learned* of the Father as to come to the Son, immediately

manifested their *faith* by their works of obedience, in submitting themselves to the ordinance of baptism. After thus publicly giving themselves up to the Lord, “they gave themselves to one another by the *will* of God,” or according to his will. Then they broke bread and continued in fellowship.

But we have no account of any one’s *believing* before *taught*, “for how shall they hear without a preacher?” Nor of any one’s being *baptized* before he *believed*, (or professed to believe.) Nor of any that came to the *sacred supper* before they were *baptized*. We then believe it to be the apostolick order, to baptize none till they profess their faith in Christ; and that till then, they cannot be considered as *qualified* members for a gospel church, nor be received into their fellowship at the Lord’s table. Therefore, before we are blamed too much, let a different line of conduct be proved from the writings of the *evangelists* or *apostles*, and it will be our happiness if we are *wrong*, to be *convinced*, that we may have opportunity to *reform*.

But that our reason for refusing *communion* with other denominations, may more fully appear, let us go on to consider the following things :

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## SECTION II.

*The Impropriety of the Baptist Churches communicating with those of other Denominations considered, and their difference in Sentiment more particularly pointed out.*

THE Baptist churches believe, that no person can be a *disciple* of Christ, that is not capable of *self-denial*; for the Author of our religion has



said, "Whosoever he be of you that *forsaketh* not all that he hath, he cannot be my *disciple* : Luke xiv. 33." "Let him *deny himself* and take up his daily *cross* and follow me : Luke ix. 23." And if he be not a *disciple*, he cannot be considered a *proper* subject of special ordinances.

We believe in *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*.

1st. That this one Lord is the woman's SEED, the IMMANUEL, born of the virgin, the one MEDIATOR between GOD and MAN, the HEAD of the Church, and ZION'S KING, a LEADER and COMMANDER of his people, the great *Pattern* and *Example* for all true Believers.

2d. *One Faith* ; that faith that *works by love* and purifies the *heart* ; which is the only faith of God's elect, and which alone can give a right to special ordinances ; for without it, it is impossible to please God. And that this *one faith*, is particularly in each qualified subject, and cannot give a right to any but those that have it.

3d. *One Baptism* ; that this one baptism is an immersion in water, in the name of the *triune* God ; which is to be continued until Christ's second coming.

Should any suppose this *one baptism* to be the *baptism* of the *Holy Ghost and fire*, spoken of by *John Baptist* and our *Saviour*, I shall take leave to dissent from their opinion, and give some reason for my own.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost was spoken of by Christ and his harbinger as that which had not then taken place.

I think any one would take singular freedom to say, that there were then no Christians who had experienced the blessings of grace in an ordinary conversion ; if it be not so, this consequence

must follow, that those whom Christ had chosen, some of whom he had *sent* forth to teach and do miracles, were ignorant of the spirituality of religion, and were still in their *sins*.

Again, further, if the *baptism* of the *Holy Ghost* be the one intended, it would exclude water baptism in every mode : For we can as easily conceive of *two* Lords as of *two* baptisms referred to one institution.

The doctrine of baptisms mentioned by the apostle, Heb. vi. 2. has no reference to the gospel institution of baptism ; but is the same *Greek word* that is translated *washings* in another chapter of the same epistle, Heb. ix. 10. There is a negation fixed to these baptisms, and they were to be left, because they were *law ceremonies*, and not *gospel institutions*.

But here will a question arise, What are we to understand by the *baptism* of the *Holy Ghost* and fire ? spoken of by John, Matt. iii. 11. and by Christ, Acts i. 5. John's words are, " I indeed baptize you with *water* unto repentance ; but *he* that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear ; *he* shall baptize you with the *Holy Ghost* and fire." Christ's words are, " And being assembled he commanded that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father ; which, saith he, ye have heard from me, for John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the *Holy Ghost*, not many days hence." Doubtless these, at this time, had as great a measure of the Spirit, as Christians in general have, and yet were not *baptized* with the *Holy Ghost*.

But the explanation of the foregoing, we meet with in the beginning of the next chapters, soon after Christ's ascension, "They were all with one accord in one place, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting : and there appeared unto them *cloven tongues, like as of fire*, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the *Holy Ghost*, and began to *speak with other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance : Acts ii. 1, 2, 3.

Here is the Holy Ghost and fire that was mentioned. For Jesus was now glorified, and the Holy Ghost according to his promise given. I think it is very evident, that the baptism of the *Holy Ghost and fire* did not respect the *ordinary* influence of God's Spirit, either in the conversion of sinners, or in its confirming influences on his people : But must respect the *extraordinary* and *miraculous* gifts bestowed on the *apostles* and *others*, for the confirmation of the gospel ; such as the gifts of *tongues, healing, prophesying, &c.*

But as these observations may differ from the general opinion, I must therefore be a little more particular. Will any person dare to say, that those *believers* at *Samaria*, whom *Philip* baptized, were not true converts ? If they were not, then *Philip* baptized a number of *unqualified subjects*, that were strangers to the love of God. If they were *true converts*, I think my observation must stand ; for it is further observed of them, that "when the apostles that were at Jerusalem, had heard that *Samaria* had *received the word of God*, they sent *Peter* and *John* unto them, who prayed for them, that they might



receive the *Holy Ghost*, (for as yet *he* was fallen upon none of them ; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they *received the Holy Ghost* :” Acts viii. 14, 15, 16. The same idea is further illustrated by St. Paul, who, when “ he came to *Ephesus*, found certain *disciples*,” and “ he said unto them, Have ye *received the Holy Ghost since ye believed* ?” Their answer was, “ We have not heard whether there be any *Holy Ghost* :” Acts xix. 1, 2—6. The apostle it seems presumed, that if they were disciples, they were baptized ; therefore did not inquire, whether they were baptized, but unto *what* they were baptized. “ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the *Holy Ghost* came on them, and they spake with *tongues and prophesied*.”

Although they had never *heard* of the *Holy Ghost* in these miraculous operations, yet they were *disciples* and *believers*.

Therefore I think I have a right to this conclusion, that the baptism of the *Holy Ghost* *ceased* when these miraculous gifts *ceased* ; and that the *one baptism* referred to, is *water baptism* : yea, even this *baptism* of the *Holy Ghost* never superseded or destroyed the necessity of *water baptism*, as an institution of Christ. See it exemplified, Acts x. 44—48.

But let none conclude I mean to deny that Christians have any *influences* of the *Holy Ghost* in this day ; I do not : neither do I believe they were without them when Christ was upon earth, or even before he came. And yet these extraordinary influences were not given, for *Jesus was not yet glorified*. Therefore the institution of baptism stands unshaken upon the firm *basis* of

a *divine command*, which will continue it until the end of time, notwithstanding *many* ancient and modern *corrupters*, of whatever name, or sect.

The Baptists not only believe that this one baptism is an institution of Christ, but that it is ever to be administered in one *mode*, and to one kind of *subjects*. Our opponents suppose (at least many of them) that it may be administered upon a profession of faith, or without it; either by *immersion* or *sprinkling*. They acknowledge immersion to believers to be lawful baptism; could we, with a good conscience, allow the same of infant sprinkling, much of our dispute would be at an end. “But our fixed and avowed persuasion will not permit us to allow, that *infant sprinkling*, though performed with the greatest solemnity, is worthy of the name. Consequently, though they, consistently with their own principles, may receive *us* to communion among *them*, yet we cannot admit them in fellowship with us at the Lord’s table, without contradicting our professed sentiments. For it appears to us, on the most deliberate inquiry, that immersion is not a *mere circumstance*, or a *mode* of baptism, but essential to the ordinance: so that in our judgment, he who is not immersed is not baptized. This is one of our reasons for refusing communion to our Pædobaptist brethren, whom in many respects, we highly esteem, and towards whom we think it our duty to cultivate the most cordial affection.”\*

We really believe one *mode* of baptism to be of *divine* appointment; all others but *human invention*.

\* Booth’s Apol. p. 14.

But is this ordinance of our Lord left in such *obscurity*, that an honest mind must be always at a loss how to practise it ? To plead this, is to *impeach* Christ, that he has not been as *faithful* in his own house as a son, as *Moses* was as a servant : Heb. iii. 5, 6.

But from whence does it appear that baptism is a duty ? Not from any *moral precept*, but from a *positive institution*. “ All positive institutions depend entirely upon the *will* and declaration of the person who institutes them, with respect to the end and design of them ; and also the due manner of performing them.”\* But are not *positive institutions* as plain as *moral precepts* ? If so, why do we *blame* the sinner for not complying with one, and *excuse* the Christian for neglecting the other ?

But it is said, they do not neglect it, but only practise it in a different way ! But is this different way a *divine institution*, or something substituted in its room ? If the former, we may presume that it is made plain in the word, as it is not designed for men of science only, but for *unlearned men* and *women*, and for babes in Christ.

The instance recorded in scripture concerning Saul who was sent to destroy Amalek, with the prophet's reply to him at his return, may serve as a *specimen* to discover the *nature* and *effects* of disobedience. The command was *positive*, and was in part obeyed ; but “ the best of the sheep and oxen were saved alive.” Saul was very confident he had performed the will of the Lord, and thus addressed Samuel : “ Blessed be thou of the Lord ; I have performed the commandment of the Lord :” 1 Sam. xv. 18.

\* Letters to Bishop Hoadley.



And doubtless *Saul* would have carried his point, had not an inspired prophet withstood him. It is likely *Saul* had some specious pretences for his conduct : he might flatter himself that these sheep and oxen might be a large saving of the property of Israel ; and that to save them to *do sacrifice* to the Lord, was a laudable design ; he did not pretend he had the least regard to *self* in the whole affair, but was now prudently taking care that *Jehovah's* altar might be loaded with the richest sacrifices. But the prophet soon gave him to understand, that *obedience* to divine appointments, such as depend entirely on an *express* command, is better in the sight of God than hecatombs of bleeding beasts, or clouds of smoaking incense : *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry* : 1 Sam. xi. 23.

When the children of Israel were returned from their captivity, they gathered themselves to Ezra the scribe, to be instructed in their duty out of the law, “ And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by *Moses*, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month : Neh. viii. 14.” This was a *positive institution*, and justly claimed the *obedience* of all Israel. But notwithstanding this, it had not been kept in the instituted way from the days of *Joshua*, until the days of *Nehemiah*. Was the institution to blame for their neglect, or must the blame fall on them ? On them, surely. But might not some plausible objections be made against reformation ? What if some had asked the question, “ If this be so, why did none of the *learned fathers* find it out ? Were not *Samuel*, *David*, *Sol-*

omon, Jehoshaphat, Asa, Josiah and Hezekiah, all good men ? and they did not keep this feast in booths." What if others had said, " We do not understand the word *booths* in such a point of light : a *booth* means a sort of tent, the design of which is to screen us from the scorching beams of the sun, and defend us from the injuries of the weather ; and as our houses answer these purposes, we esteem it lawful for us to eat this feast in them."

But what would all these objections, and many more that might be made, avail in the mind of a man who was desirous for reformation, and had his eyes open to read in the law of the Lord ? " It was found *written* in the law of the Lord ;" therefore it was a sufficient reason for every one to engage in reformation, whose heart was brought to love the law of his God.

We profess to take the word of God for a perfect rule of faith and practice ; if so, we are not to follow the opinions of the best of men, though ever so learned and great, any further than they follow Christ, or walk according to his institutions. " To the law and the testimony," this is our only guide in matters of religion. And from hence we find, that baptism is a *positive institution* of Christ, left in his church for the benefit of *his* people ; concerning which we can know nothing but from the revealed will of the great Lawgiver. Had the baptism of *unbelievers* been intended, it would have been *declared* : if it were either *expressed* or *implied*, the *apostles* must have understood it, and their *practice* would have discovered it ; of which nothing certain has ever yet been made to appear.

If sprinkling had been the *divinely appointed mode*, it would be rational to expect to find it exemplified in scripture; and that instead of their going *to the water*, that they brought the *water to them*. "It behoves us therefore, well to consider the rule which our Lord has given relating to this ordinance."\* "Because we can have *no other* direction in these sort of duties, unless we have recourse to mere invention, which makes them our own *institutions*, and not the institutions of him who first appointed them."

Therefore we find, after the most deliberate inquiry, that there is such a *real* difference in our sentiments and practice, that what the *Pædobaptists* believe and practise for baptism, is so *essentially* different from Christ's appointment, that in our opinion it *cannot* be baptism.

Then surely we must be the most *inconsistent* set of Christians in the world, to hold up the necessity of baptism by our *profession*, and yet when we come to the Lord's table, *practically deny it*, by receiving those to our communion whom we do not hesitate to tell the world, we look upon as unbaptized persons; and so for the sake of holding *free communion*, we must "*build again the things that we have destroyed*, and thereby make ourselves *transgressors*," for once renouncing them.

But let us go on to see, what such a practice is built upon.

\* Booth's *Apol.* p. 24.

† B. Hoadley's *p. ac.* p. 3.

### SECTION III.

*The Arguments for free Communion considered—others offered in Vindication of the Close Communionists.*

SHOULD all that has been observed in the preceding pages be assented to, yet this question may be put : Cannot the Baptist churches *communicate* with the *Pædobaptists*, where they obtain satisfaction that they are *Christians*, and are *sincere* ? Let us try the matter. The brother proposing to commune informs the church to whom he applies, that he has reason to *suppose* he was baptized in his infancy, and has never seen it to be his *duty* to be baptized since. Did he but see it to be duty, he would cordially comply with it ; but as he does not, desires to partake with them as he is.

What can the church do ? Must the man be debarred from doing his duty in one instance, because he cannot see it in another ? Or will they drag him into the *water*, against the *light* of his own conscience ? Surely not the latter. Some reasons must be given, or the man ought to be received. But what is the ground of his application ? Why, he is a *Christian*, and is *sincere*, and he is *baptized* to himself, or he considers himself so.

That he is a *Christian*, the church may be *fully satisfied* ; and that he may be *sincere*, they do not pretend to deny ; but *sincerity* is not the *term* of communion : but being *conformed* to the apostles' *doctrine*, and *continuing steadfastly therein* : Acts ii. 42.



If sincerity be the *term of communion*, why might not Paul have been admitted when he was a member in good standing in the *Jewish church*? But it may be objected that he persecuted the saints of Jesus: it is true; but who can challenge his sincerity from his own declaration? *I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth: Acts xxvi. 9.* And whatever we practise that is not according to the will of Christ, is contrary thereto, although we be ever so sincere in doing it.

May we not suppose that some of all denominations are *sincere*, although ever so *erroneous*? But to illustrate the idea, suppose one who had been educated a Roman Catholic, should become a true convert, so as to satisfy a judgment of *charity*: he asks for communion at the Lord's table, but at the same time lets the church know, that he could not, with a good conscience, receive the *cup*. Although he has renounced the church of Rome, the *mother of abominations*, yet he would not reject any thing that appears to him to be right, because that church held the same; he now acts honestly, according to the best light he has. Would any Protestant church commune with him? Surely if they mean to practise *free communion* they ought to. The man is allowed indeed to be in an *error*, but then it is of that kind that is called "*non-essential, not fundamental, merely circumstantial*"—"the *strong* ought to bear the *infirmities of the weak*"—he must be received.

At their next communion season, there comes a *disciple of George Fox*, who denies *water baptism* in every mode, but he is convinced of one error in his party, respecting the *sacred supper*,

and is now desirous to testify his obedience to this institution. *Free communion* is too liberal in its sentiments to reject him ; his plea is *sincerity*, which no one has a right to scruple, without falling under that severe reproof, “ Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant ? to his *own* master he stands or falls.” Neither of the foregoing instances can be more inconsistent, than for a *Baptist church* to commune with a *Pædobaptist*, whilst they hold him to be unbaptized. And the arguments that will vindicate the conduct of *one*, will serve the same purpose for the *other*.

But it may be profitable here to have recourse to the scripture doctrine in this matter, and if that approves of such a line of conduct, we ought to drop the dispute ; if not, to contend earnestly for this article of the Christian faith.

It must be acknowledged, that there is a connexion between the two positive institutions of Christ, and that one of them must be *prior* to the other. For a man cannot partake of the Lord’s supper, and be baptized, at the same time.

It is reasonable to suppose, that these appointments, with regard to their order and connexion, depend as much on the sovereign will and pleasure of the Lawgiver, as the appointments themselves. “ Here then the question is, Has our sovereign Lord revealed his will, in regard to this matter ? To the law and to the testimony.” How readest thou ? “ To determine the query, we may first consider the order of *time* in which the two positive institutions of the New Testament were appointed : That baptism was an ordinance of God ; that submission was

required, and that it was administered to multitudes before the sacred supper was heard of or had existence, are undeniable facts.”\* John Baptist, the apostles, and even the Son of God incarnate, all practically recommended baptism, at a time when it would have been impious to have eaten bread and drank wine, as an ordinance of divine worship. Baptism therefore had the priority in point of institution.

Let us next consider the order of *words* in the great commission. When a risen Saviour said to his disciples, “ALL POWER is given me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU:” Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. The first article of the commission is, to teach, then—what? To *baptize*, or to *administer the Lord’s supper*? let every conscience judge.

Let us next consider the *apostolic practice*. It is very evident the apostles understood our Lord in the sense for which we plead, and practised accordingly. For when a number were “pricked in their heart, and cried, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, *Repent*, and”—what, break bread? Nay, verily; but “be baptized every one of you.” The willing converts followed his direction. “Then they that gladly received his word were *baptized*.”

The next step was, to *join themselves to the church*, and afterwards they united in breaking of bread. This is *apostolic order*, and cannot

\* Booth’s Apol. p. 31.

be denied, without contradicting the *oracles* of truth.

When Christ has thus revealed his will, for us to dispute it, is rebellion. It rather becomes us, with humility, to rejoice that he hath made the path of our *duty* so plain.

If what has already been observed stands consistent with scripture, a contrary practice cannot be proved from the *word*; unless it be like a leaden rule, that will apply to any thing. Then if this be the order in which the two gospel institutions stand, we shall do well to consider, who hath given us a dispensing power, to set aside one which claims a *prior* right on the convert's obedience, for the sake of indulging him in another.

Moses had no right to alter a single pin in the *tabernacle*, but was admonished to make all things according to the *pattern* shewn in the mount. And whosoever inverts the order of Christ's appointments, must be considered as dictating to INFINITE WISDOM.

The next thing that I shall consider is, the *arguments* drawn from St. Paul's words to the Romans : *Receive ye one another as Christ also hath received us* : Rom. xi. 7. Hence our opponents argue, that such as God has *received*, we have reason to suppose he communes with. We cannot, therefore, in the exercise of a Christian temper, refuse to receive them. But is this *receiving* limited to communicating at the Lord's table? Is there no other way for us to manifest our love to our brethren of other denominations, but for us practically to give up what we conscientiously believe to be the *order* of God's house? Before we make such a movement, it



will be proper to inquire into the apostle's meaning ; and instead of giving my own thoughts on the text, I choose rather to transcribe a passage from a Pædobaptist writer,\* quoted by Mr. BOOTH,† who, dissenting from what our opponents infer, observes—" This difference is glaringly forced and wide, discovering their ignorance of the true meaning and design of the text, who make it. The apostle is not here speaking of admission to church membership at all ; nor does he consider those to whom he writes in the precise light of the church universal, but as members of a *particular* church or body, among whom there was some difference of opinion about meats, &c. which was like to break their communing together, as is plain from the preceding chapter. The apostle sets himself to prevent this, and to accomplish a reconciliation ? And after a number of healing things, he concludes with these words—*Receive ye one another* ; that is, ye who are saints at Rome, who have agreed to walk together in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord Jesus ; ye who are professedly united in church communion, receive ye one another in love, as becometh saints united in one body for mutual benefit. Bear ye one another's burdens : watch over and admonish one another in love, notwithstanding some difference in sentiments among you, as to the eating certain meats, and regarding certain days ; but let not that difference make any breach in your communion together as a church of Christ. But let the strong bear with those that are weak ; and the weak

\* Smith's Compend. Acc. of the form and order of the church, p. 109, 110.      † Apology, p. 85.

not be offended with the liberty of the strong. Judge not one another uncharitably ; but let brotherly love continue. This is precisely the apostle's meaning, as will appear to those who look impartially into the connexion of his argument, and by no means serves the purpose for which the objectors bring it." There is an essential difference between their eating or not eating meats in the apostolic times, and our being baptized or not baptized, *prior* to communion at the Lord's table. The *latter* being a solemn institution of divine worship : but can this be asserted of the *former* ? Surely it must be straining things beyond bounds, to set these obsolete, antiquated rites in contrast with a gospel institution.

Another argument made use of in favour of *free communion* is, that if they are God's children, *he* communes with them ; and if so, it would be superstition for any to refuse to come to the sacred table with them. But it is not what God can or does do, but his revealed will, that is the rule of our duty. Many have left the *word* of God out of a partial regard to the characters of great and good men. But it may be remembered, that when the Lord sent the *prophet* from Judah to *cry* against the altar at Bethel, that he was forbid to eat bread or drink water, in that place. For a time he kept close to the *word* of the Lord, and prospered. But after he was gone, an old prophet pursued after him, and finally prevailed with him to return. Had he appeared as an open enemy, it is not likely the prophet would have heard to him ; but this is the way in which he prevailed with him, by telling him—I also am a prophet ; and that an

*angel spake unto me to bring thee back.* But though a prophet, or an angel from heaven had spoken unto him, he had no warrant to leave the word of God ; and for his disobedience was soon slain of a lion.\*

Another argument made use of by those who plead for *open communion* is, that we can join in prayer, either in our families or in public, with Pædobaptists, or can hear them preach occasionally, and yet, after all, cannot come to the Lord's table with them. It is true, and perhaps some cause can be shewn for our conduct. We esteem it not only *lawful*, but to be our *indispensable duty*, to manifest *our* love to all that love the Lord, in every way that is not inconsistent with a revelation of the divine will in some other respects.

I presume it will be a given point, that *circumcision* was absolutely necessary for every male, in order to partake at the paschal supper ; this was not the effect of any bigoted notion in the Israelites, but by a positive command of Jehovah : *Exod. xii. 48.* Had *Enoch*, who walked with God as a saint, and who, as a prophet, foretold the coming of Christ to judgment ; or *Noah*, who was an *heir of the righteousness of faith*, as well as a preacher of it ; or *Melchisedek*, that illustrious type of the great Messiah ; had these been contemporary with Moses, and sojourners in the same wilderness, they could not have been admitted to communion in the Israelitish church, without submitting to *circumcision*. Yet had Enoch been in the camp of Israel when *Korah and his company* mutinied, and had been disposed to have given the reb-

\* See this account, 1 Kings, xiii.

els a lecture on the second coming of Christ, I cannot suppose his offered service would have been rejected by Moses, merely because he was not circumcised. Had *Noah* been present when the tabernacle was erected, and had been disposed to have given the people a sermon on the future *incarnation* of the Son of God, and the *righteousness of faith*, of which that sacred structure had a typical regard, I cannot but think they would have given him a hearing; and yet the *positive law* of Jehovah would have forbidden their partaking at the paschal feast.

Our Lord, though he warned his hearers against the pride and hypocrisy, the unbelief and covetousness of the Pharisees and Scribes, yet exhorted the people to regard the truths they delivered: Mat. xxiii. 1, 2, 3. Yet would any assert that our Lord would have admitted these ecclesiastics to communion in special ordinances? When the beloved disciple said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he followed not with us:" Jesus answered, "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us, is for us:" Luke ix. 49, 50. From hence it appears, that we ought to encourage those who are fighting against the common enemy, and are propagating the common truth, although we cannot commune in special ordinances together.

Another argument which has been addressed with considerable effect, to the feelings and passions of Christians, is, the consequences that will follow upon close communion, i. e. that if Christians cannot communicate together in this



world, how can they expect to enjoy fellowship together in heaven.

This is something very frightful indeed ! that there must be two heavens for separate spirits !

But this may be answered by attending to a few things. Who would dare to anathematize all those who deny the use of both ordinances ? Or, who will venture to say, that among the different kindreds, tongues and tribes, who will appear in that illustrious throng, at the decisive hour, there will be none who never saw nor practised the sacred ordinances in any form ? Or, who will affirm, that none who are excommunicated persons will ever be admitted into heaven ?

And yet upon gospel principles, it would be unlawful to commune with them while such.

But these objections must appear of no weight to the candid. For where is there a church of any denomination that there is not such difference of opinion in some things among them, as at some times to produce trials, and at others, sharp contentions ? And yet may we not suppose that *one* heaven will hold them all after death ? Yes ; death, the great *leveller*, will put an end to our *party* disputes, and bring the dust of contending Christians to rest in sweet agreement in the grave ! equally so will the fiery trial, which shall burn up all the *hay, wood and stubble* from the soul, bring the spirits of all good men to dwell in a state of uninterrupted felicity.

The last thing that I shall consider, which is brought as a plea for open communion, is, that

the scripture account of baptism is left in such darkness and ambiguity, both as to the subjects and mode, that nothing certain can be determined. Therefore it calls for our charity towards those who differ from us. It may be remembered, that when the talents were committed to the servants to occupy, the two that improved made no complaints; the other had a *hard* master, an *austere* man; a great many difficulties stood in the way of duty. That the baptism of infants is not made plain, we shall not deny: but, that believers were baptized, is as plain as words can make it; and shines through the New Testament as if written with a *sun-beam*. If sprinkling be the mode intended in the New Testament, we must concede to the proposition that is not made plain. It would seem like an ambiguous affair indeed, to relate, that both the *administrator* and the *person baptized*, *went down into the water, and came up out of it* again, when all that was to be done, was only to sprinkle a little water in the face. Yea, to read in the volume of inspiration that multitudes were baptized *in the river Jordan*; and that they were *baptized in Enon, because there was much water there*, when a few basins of water would have served the purpose equally well. This would seem indeed to be so dark, that *common sense* must have been at a loss, how to have reconciled this *ancient account* with *modern practice*, had it not been that some gentlemen of great invention, have lent their friendly aid, and cast peculiar light upon the subject. They have informed the world, that the large quantity of water was necessary for the use of the camels and asses the people rode upon; whereas

the only thing that the scriptures bring into view, is the conveniency of *baptizing*. That the *Pædobaptists* consider it as not made plain in scripture ; or, that it is left to be practised indifferently, as circumstances may require, is abundantly evident from their conduct ; for many of them administer *both* ways ; sometimes in the meeting-house, and then *in a river*. What strange *amphibious* Christians !

If the *Greek verb baptizo* has not been rightly explained, we have no reason to suppose it ever will be.

And this evidence we find in our favour from the various expositors upon it, that all the Baptists agree, that the word in its first or primary sense, signifies to *dip* or *plunge*, and only in a secondary and consequential sense, to *wash*.\* Many of the *Pædobaptists* allow the first sense of the word to be the same as we do :† and if others deny it, yet still the evidence stands in our favour ; for none would give it up against themselves, if they were not obliged in justice to do it. A number of ancient, learned expositors upon the *Greek* allow this sense.‡ The matter is out of dispute in our minds ; and we really think, that the combination of *words* and *circumstances* recorded in the New Testament, have made it as *plain* as any others could, so that “ he may run that readeth.” So plain that “ no wayfaring man, though a fool, needs err therein.” Yet many who have been educat-

\* Doctor Gill's answer to Mr. Dickenson, p. 90.

† See the learned Henry, on Rom. vi. 4. Also quoted by Mr. Foster, Dr. Doddridge, Mr. Burkitt, Dr. Maclaine, Dr. Wall, and Mr. Poole.

‡ Scapula, Schrevelius, Budæus, Calvin, Beza, Casaubon, Grotius, &c. quoted with their words by Dr. Gill.

ed in the theory of the Christian religion, from their early days, excuse themselves from this duty, because they cannot see it. But it is so plain that an *Ethiopian Eunuch*, who, but a few minutes before, did not *understand what he read*, was soon instructed in the weighty concerns of his soul, and *believed in the truth with all his heart*; which immediately led him to come down from his chariot, and go down into the water. Surely the Christian who boasts superior advantages above an *Ethiopian*, must stand admonished by this example. If *Ananias of Damascus*, was to meet such an indifferent brother, would he not address him in his admonishing language, "Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized." Would not the ready obedience of the jailor, who "arose the same hour of the night, and was baptized, he and all his straight-way," reprove such a delaying brother?

Could not *Lydia* leave the *river side*, where the Lord first *opened her heart*, before she gave proof of her faith, by submitting to this ordinance? Then let the doubting lift their eyes and see what a cloud of witnesses we are surrounded with, and lay aside every weight, and run the self-denying race; and see that they do not make void the *commandments of God*, through their *tradition*.

Having thus gone through with what I proposed, I shall close the whole by a brief address to the Baptist Churches.

*Dear Brethren,*

It was at the request of a number of you that I attempted to write; and if I should fail of answering your expectations, yet still I have the



testimony of my conscience, to the rectitude of my intention ; and my inability you will tenderly impeach. You will find a great difference in those who object against our order, with regard to *close communion*. Some, no doubt, are to be considered in the light of those we meet with, Ezra iv. 2, who requested of those Jewish fathers, to build with them ; their plea was, “ We seek your God as ye do ; and we do sacrifice to him since the day of Efar-haddon, king of Assur.” These were not admitted, for they were enemies, and only sought to overthrow those who were building.

But you will meet with others, who, joying and beholding your order, would gladly take privileges with you ; who stand high in your esteem as friends to the cause of truth ; these demand the tenderest expressions of your love. Yet it is never to be expressed in a way contrary to God’s revealed will. Therefore, if our profession be consistent with the *word of truth*, let our practice be so too. Let those who open their doors for free communion consider, whether they do not give more liberty than the scriptures do, by sitting down at the holy table with those whom they look upon as unbaptized. They will do well to search for a precedent for their conduct in the word of God. I am persuaded, if they were to ask the Christian world in general, they would readily join with the apostle and say, “ We have no such custom, nor the churches of God” that were before us, as to receive unbaptized persons to communicate with us.

Let those who practise according to their profession, never be *ashamed* of the *cross* of Christ ;

but remember that it is enough that the *disciple* be *as* his Lord, and the *servant* be *as* his master. Remember the apostle's words to the Thessalonians, "Now we command you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us : " 2 Thess. iii. 6. It may be your duty to withdraw from them that you consider as not conformed to the tradition of the apostles ; so far, as not to partake together at the Lord's table.

But I shall close with the words of the beloved *Paul* to the Corinthians : " Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment : " 1 Cor. i. 10.



THE

BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS ONLY,

AND THE

Particular Communion

OF

THE BAPTIST CHURCHES,

EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED.

IN THREE PARTS.

THE FIRST—PUBLISHED ORIGINALLY IN 1789;

THE SECOND—IN 1794;

THE THIRD—AN *APPENDIX*, CONTAINING ADDITIONAL  
OBSERVATIONS AND ARGUMENTS, WITH STRICTURES ON  
SEVERAL LATE PUBLICATIONS.

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BY THOMAS BALDWIN.

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PART II.

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FOURTH EDITION, REVISED.

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Boston :

Printed and sold by MANNING & LORING, No. 2, Cornhill.

1806.



**DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, to wit:**

**BE IT REMEMBERED**, That on the seventh day of August, in the thirty-first year of the independence of the United States of America, **MANNING & LORING**, of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof they claim as Proprietors, in the words following, *to wit*:—"The Baptism of Believers only, and the Particular Communion of the Baptist Churches, explained and vindicated. In Three Parts. The first—published originally in 1789; the second—in 1794; the third—an Appendix, containing Additional Observations and Arguments, with Strictures on several late Publications. By **THOMAS BALDWIN**."

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**N. GOODALE**, *Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*

**A true Copy of Record.**

**Attest:**

**N. GOODALE**, *Clerk.*

# BRIEF VINDICATION, &c.\*

## SECTION I.

### *Preliminary Observations on the Subject in Dispute.*

REVEREND SIR,

YOUR *Friendly Letter*, which was published in December, 1791, I could not obtain until several months after ; and have not the pleasure of acknowledging your politeness in sending me a copy ; although from an apology offered by your generous *brothers*, I am inclined to hope it was not a designed omission.

In my other Piece I observed, “ that it was not the love of controversy which induced me to write.” I have the happiness still to believe, that this is not my greatest motive. And had your arguments proved our sentiments and practice respecting communion, to be *unscriptural*, or *inconsistent* with that brotherly affection which the gospel requires, I should indeed ‘ have been a gainer by the controversy,’ and would have acknowledged myself indebted to you for the instruction. But after I had carefully examined your arguments, I did not find the evidence sufficient to produce conviction : therefore, am obliged in *sincerity* to abide by my former opinion.

Were the dispute between us to be considered merely *personal*, and unconnected with the interests of re-

\* This Part must still be considered as a Reply to the remarks of the Rev. Neah Worcester, A. B. in his *Friendly Letter* to the Author.

ligion, I should not think myself called upon to attempt a reply. But since the honour of Christ as Head of the church, and Law-giver in his own kingdom, and the peace and tranquillity of two denominations of Christians are in some measure involved in this dispute, it appears to me of importance that the ground of the controversy should be fully ascertained. And as you have endeavoured to lay the blame wholly to our denomination, I shall most cheerfully come forward, with a vindication of myself and brethren.

In pursuing my present design, I shall be led to remark upon several things, which are offered to consideration in your *Friendly Letter*. In doing of which, I hope to be governed by a spirit of candour and Christian love; and can assure you, that nothing would give me more sensible regret, than to misconceive, or misrepresent your meaning. In some instances I could have wished that you had been more explicit, which would have relieved me from the fear of mistaking you.

It will not be expected, that I should follow you in the exact order in which you have treated the subject; nor that I should reply to all that you have written. Some of your observations are agreeable to my views; and some of them appear to be unconnected with the subject in dispute. To avoid prolixity, I shall omit many things which might with propriety be urged in the present controversy.

You have observed, that with some degree of care you had perused the pamphlet which I had written: if so, you must have observed our main objections to free communion consist essentially, in two things; *viz.* 1. That baptism is a divinely appointed pre-requisite to communion at the Lord's table. 2. That immersion upon a profession of faith is essential to gospel baptism. The first of these I take for granted you have given up: for you observe, (p. 9.) 'The question is not, whether baptism in *some* mode be an *essential* qualification;' you also add, (p. 13.) 'I do not deny that baptism was *prior* to coming to the Lord's table in the apostolick practice. I suppose it was: and I also suppose their example to be worthy of imitation in like circumstances.'

Thus, Sir, he who is unbaptized, however amiable his character may appear, is *essentially disqualified* in your esteem. In this particular we seem to be agreed, that baptism in *some mode* is essential to a due qualification for the Lord's table. And I believe this to be the general sense of the two denominations. The other objection remains yet to be considered ; which may be divided into two questions : i. e. Who are the proper *subjects* of baptism ? And, what is the appointed *mode* ? I have said in my other Piece, that we consider "professed believers as the *only* proper subjects of baptism ;" and "that immersion is not a mere *circumstance*, or *mode* of baptism, but essential to the ordinance." I have not observed in your Letter that you have disproved these sentiments ; but what you have said in this respect shall be attended to in its place. For the present we shall only say, that you have raised a huge host of *suppositions* and *consequences*, and brought them all against our sentiments, as if you were determined to frighten us out of our allegiance to the great *Law-giver* : but we may say as Saint Paul in another case, *None of these things move us.*

If I have rightly comprehended your reasoning in favour of *free communion*, the most material arguments are the following. 1. 'That the essence of baptism does not consist in any one particular mode whatever.' (p. 10.) 2. If it should finally appear, that you had missed the divine appointment, yet, as 'godly *sincerity* is the very SOUL and ESSENCE of conformity to Christ, you are therefore 'as well accepted in the sight of God, as though *your* outward conduct had been according to the appointed mode.' (p. 19, 21.) 3. 'Supposing that the Pædobaptists are really in an error, if Christ does not view the error as so essential but that he will commune with them, why cannot you commune with those at the table, with whom God communes ?' (p. 28, 29.)

These appear to be the main pillars on which your superstructure is built ; and shall each of them be particularly considered. Having thus stated the constituent parts of the dispute, we are now prepared to attend to each particular.



## SECTION II.

*Professed Believers the only appointed Subjects of Baptism.*

IN your third part you observe, ‘The question to be disputed is summarily this : Whether, for a person to be baptized by immersion, after believing, be an essential term of communion at the Lord’s table ?’ Of this question you inform your readers that I ‘take the affirmative side.’ But, my dear sir, you have not stated the question right : that is, if you mean to have me take the affirmative. Nor will your quotations from me support such a statement. The passages quoted, and from which you make the mistake, are in these words ; that “baptism is to be administered only in one mode, and to one kind of subjects.” That “professed believers are the *only* proper subjects of baptism.” I suppose the difference to be easily discerned. I said “professed believers,” you say “to be baptized after believing.” The former supposes that a person may satisfy a judgment of charity, and yet be a hypocrite : the latter, that he is infallibly a believer. I conclude, that a person may be baptized according to Christ’s institution, and yet be a hypocrite ; but he cannot be baptized institutionally, without a profession of faith. We are obliged by the gospel rule to require a profession ; but we are not obliged to *know* the *sincerity* of the person who makes it.

Now, Sir, to some the question may appear to be the same ; but it is evident that there is a very specific difference ; and, from the wrong manner in which you have stated it, you have gone on to draw false conclusions, and to crowd a train of disagreeable consequences upon our sentiments, which will appear of no force, when the question is rightly considered.

You inform your readers, (p. 12) that we suppose, “not only that immersion is essential to the ordinance of baptism, but that none are proper subjects of it but visible believers.” From this you draw the following inference : “If none are proper subjects but visible be-

lievers, none are proper subjects but real believers.' You illustrate it as follows : ' For although a person's outwardly appearing to be a proper subject, may give him a right in the sight of men, it does not in the sight of God.'

You will permit me here to inquire, whether you have any other method to judge of the '*real piety*,' the '*godly sincerity*,' or the proper qualifications of persons for special ordinances, but what is visible, or in the sight of men ? If you have, it is a prerogative which we do not claim. I think, Sir, the inference grants, that they have a right in the sight of men ; and although God may know them to be hypocrites, as he is not pleased to interpose and make the matter visible, who will dare to challenge their right, and forbid their proceeding ?

That this observation may appear in its proper light, we will bring the matter upon trial ; and, if you please, we will borrow an example from the New Testament to illustrate it by. In the eighth chapter of the Acts, we have an account of Philip's visiting and preaching the gospel in Samaria, and of the happy effects which followed. That a people who had long been bewitched, were now reduced to reason and religion, which was the occasion of *great joy in that city* ; and it is said, " when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both *men and women*." It is also added, that *Simon believed* ; that is, he appeared to Philip and others to believe : for we cannot suppose from the account afterwards given of him, that he was a *real believer*, though at this time there was nothing appeared to the contrary. Now, what was Philip's duty in the present case ? It is evident that he required, as a *pre-requisite* in his candidates, that they *believe with all the heart* ; as appears from another circumstance recorded in the same chapter. And although Simon appeared to him to be a true believer, yet, in the sight of God, he was nothing but a hypocrite.

It is abundantly evident, that Philip required the same qualifications, in order to baptism, that the

Baptists do at the present day. It is equally evident, that he baptized a person, who, in the sight of God, had not those qualifications. The present inquiry is, whether he did right or not? If you should choose to say, he did not act consistently with his principles; this will lead us to inquire again, what reasons could determine him in acting otherwise, as he did not know the heart of Simon? But as this answer would necessarily involve you in a controversy with him, I shall for the present leave it, to be settled between you. But should you give your opinion in favour of his conduct, by whatever arguments you would vindicate *that*, the same will serve to vindicate *ours*, under similar circumstances.

It may be proper here to attend to the consequences you have drawn from the preceding observations; i. e. that upon our principles 'it *may* be necessary to administer the ordinance of baptism fifty or a hundred times to the same person.' Alarming as these consequences may appear to you, they do not greatly terrify us: For our *principles* have had a practical existence for *ages* past; and yet I can assure you, I have never heard of a person's being baptized *five and twenty times*. Nor is it common with us to baptize a person more than once. But if we should think it necessary upon any occasion to repeat it, Pædobaptists do even the same. *Some* of them have become so liberal, as not only to *immerse*, or *sprinkle*, as the candidate may choose; but, to *immerse* those who have been sprinkled in infancy, and have been members of their churches for many years! \* If it be necessary to perform it twice, I know not but that some circumstances may render it *equally* necessary to perform it *fifty times*.

But, Sir, I wish to bring the instance of Philip and Simon once more into view, as I think it may serve to remove some of your supposed difficulties. It will undoubtedly be granted, that Philip baptized the *sorcerer*, upon the same footing which he did the other Samari-

\* If I am rightly informed, the Rev. Mr. P— pastor of a church in your vicinity, has baptized a number who had been baptized in infancy. The same has been done by the Rev. Mr. B— of Randolph, in Vermont. Other instances might be mentioned if necessary.

tan converts, i. e. upon a *profession of faith*. But, when Peter and John came to visit the brethren at Samaria, and had laid their hands on a number, by which means the *miraculous* gifts of the Holy Ghost were conferred, *Simon* beholding, was filled with astonishment, and proceeded to offer them money, in order to obtain this power. This conduct betrayed his ignorance of the true spirit of religion, and exposed him to that most severe reproof from *Peter*; “Thy money perish with thee,—thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter : *for thy heart is not right in the sight of God*. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” He was no longer to be considered as a Christian, but under the reigning power of guilt and unbelief.

Now should we suppose *Philip* to return this way again in a few weeks, and after inquiring into the state of his young converts, he is informed of the situation of *Simon*, and from the account he receives is desirous of a personal interview with him : It is agreed to, and when the time arrives, *Simon* comes before him ; blushing and confusion appear in his face ; shame and sorrow mingle in his eyes ; he pauses—he sighs ! at length thus addresses the Evangelist : “ I have indeed done dishonour to the Christian name, and have given ample proof to the world, that I was a stranger to the power and divinity of the gospel : and although my admiration was raised by the miracles I beheld, my passions moved and charmed by the soft eloquence of your persuasive tongue ; yet alas ! I was but in love with myself, instead of a Saviour ; but *my iniquity has found me out, and now appears hateful to me*.” He informs *Philip*, that the exhortation given him by the apostle *Peter* to *repent*, was so accompanied with the divine energy, that he had now reason to hope that he had become a true penitent. *Philip*, and the church at Samaria, are fully satisfied, that although *Simon*, when he made a profession, was *in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity*, yet that he is now become a true child of God.

You will permit me here in my turn to inquire, whether *Simon* can now be looked upon as a *visibly qual-*



ified member for church fellowship and communion ? or whether he is to be baptized again ? I do not wish to anticipate your answer ; but as it is a difficulty of your own proposing, I think it reasonable to give you the labouring oar ; and whatever way you are pleased to decide in this case, will undoubtedly relieve us under similar circumstances.

Upon the whole, does it not appear evident to every candid reader, that we require no more, nor any other qualifications in our candidates for baptism, than what were required in the apostolick age ? They required their candidates to *believe with all the heart* ; we require no more. Therefore, whatever consequences are fairly deducible from our principles in this point, the same are equally chargeable upon theirs.

Agreeably to the foregoing observations are the sentiments of many Pædobaptist writers. I will here cite the words of one. “ It is manifest (saith he) that Philip’s principles were, to baptize none but what had saving grace, and believed with all their hearts.” Also, “ It is manifest that the apostles did not intend to baptize any adult persons, except they had knowledge or satisfaction that they had the seed of grace sown in their hearts. Witness the instance of Philip’s baptizing the eunuch ; again, for proof, Peter’s baptizing Cornelius, and those Gentiles that believed, after they had received the Holy Ghost, as well as the believing Jews : So also the instance of the jailer’s family. Not to multiply instances, it is well known, or may be well known, that faith is always spoken of in the word of God before baptism ; and we all agree that baptism is to be administered to a person before the Lord’s supper.”\* If this be a just statement of facts, that neither Philip nor the apostles meant to baptize any adults, but those who believed with all the heart ; and that it is well known that faith is always spoken of in the word of God before baptizing ; surely the Baptists cannot be reasonably blamed, for endeavouring to imitate apostolick practice,

\* Frothingham’s Right to the Lord’s Supper, p. 65, 66.

From the preceding remarks, you may probably see wherein you have mistaken the matter, in charging our sentiments with error respecting the qualifications of candidates for baptism. You seem to suppose, that because we require them to be *visible believers*, that we are obliged to know that they are *real believers* : This is evidently implied in your objection, ‘ That if none are proper subjects but visible believers, none are proper subjects but real believers.’ That every man who professes religion ought to be what he professes, no one will deny ; but, that we are obliged to *know* them to be sincere, I have never yet conceived. Were we, for fear of the consequences, to refuse to administer either the ordinance of baptism, or the Lord’s supper, until we absolutely knew who were *sincere*, I believe we should administer no more until the end of time.

But, should we allow all the consequences which you have supposed to be true, (which will by no means be granted) and should we then suppose again, that some imagination, more fertile than yours, might suggest twice as many more, what then ? Are we to mutilate or lay aside a positive institution, for fear of consequences which are very unlikely ever to take place ? Is our obedience to be measured by our own conveniency, or to be withheld because of some supposed difficulties ? Surely not.

Positive institutions require our implicit obedience to the sovereign will of Him who instituted them, without assigning any reasons for their fitness, or making a proviso in case of supposed difficulties. They are well distinguished from moral precepts, by a late learned writer. His words are as follow : “ Moral precepts, are precepts the reason of which we see ; positive precepts, are precepts the reason of which we do not see. Moral duties arise out of the nature of the case itself, prior to external command ; positive duties do not arise out of the nature of the case, but from external command ; nor would they be duties at all, were it not for such command, received from Him whose creatures and subjects we are.”\* Our obligations to precepts of this kind,

\* Bishop Butler’s Analogy of Religion, p. 172.

are well described by President Edwards ; his words are—"Such precepts are the greatest and most proper trial of obedience, because in them the mere authority and will of the Legislator is the sole ground of the obligation (and nothing in the natures of the things themselves ; ) and therefore they are the greatest trial of any person's respect to that authority and will."\*

Had the excellent Mr. Edwards viewed positive institutions in the same indifferent light which you do, it is not probable he would have written after this manner ; but perhaps he had never thought of your happy succedaneum, '*sincerity*,' which, like the ancient philosopher's stone, can turn all our *external* omissions of positive duties into real acts of obedience.

I conclude it will not be denied, that *professed believers* are proper subjects of baptism : but the question before us is, Whether they are the *only* proper subjects ? When I use the term *proper*, I mean not, what is become so by *tradition* ; but what is agreeable to the institution, as recorded in the sacred history of baptism. That no other instances are recorded you implicitly acknowledge, when you say, 'I would query, whether the evidence that believers were baptized, is any evidence that infants were not also baptized ?' This query, in the first instance, grants, that there is *evidence* that believers were baptized. Secondly, it asks, 'Whether that is any evidence that infants were not also baptized ?' It will be granted that it is not positive evidence that they were not ; nor is it, that they were not anointed with the *holy chrism*, or *signed* with the sign of the cross, or twenty other things done to them of which the 'scripture is *silent*.' But it is circumstantial evidence that they were not : for, that the sacred historians, when recording the many instances of the baptism of believers for the space of near sixty years, until the volume of inspiration was closed, and never once mentioning a single instance of an infant, must look like a design, against infant baptism, provided it was then in practice. It is not easy to account for their neglecting to record a *fact*, on which so much depended, as the fu-

ture peace, and order of the church of Christ. Nor does it appear to us a sufficient apology for an omission so interesting to say, that the right of infants was so well established under the Jewish dispensation, that it was unnecessary that any express mention should be made of it in the New Testament; unless baptism is to be considered as a Jewish rite, rather than a Christian institution. For, under the gospel dispensation, the *priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law*, with respect to positive institutions.

In order to bring this head to a close, you will permit me to inquire, Whether Pædobaptists in general do not require, in all unbaptized adults, a personal profession of faith, in order to their being admitted to the ordinance of baptism? That they do, will appear from their own testimony: "Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, until they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him."\*

Shall I add to this another, from a late advocate for infant baptism, who has complained much of the Baptists for their "*assuming*" language, in calling the baptism administered by them, by way of distinction, "*Believers' Baptism*." "Whereas, (saith he) there is no other baptism administered in our churches but the baptism of believers, or those who are accounted such, either upon their personal profession, or in the repute of the church, and God's gracious acceptance: As to adult persons unbaptized, they are no otherwise admitted to baptism among us, it is known, than upon a personal profession of faith."†

This gentleman, from the general manner of his expressions, must be understood to represent the whole denomination; and evidently carries the matter quite as far as we do. If a *profession of faith* be the only terms on which you admit adults to baptism; if, after this, they should prove their profession to be false, you are as much obliged to baptize them '*fifty times*,' in order

\* Assembly of Divines' Catechism.

† Clark's Defence of Infant baptism, p. 2.



to be consistent upon your sentiments, as we are upon ours. The strongest *terms* you have quoted from me are, "That none are proper subjects of baptism but *professed believers*." We have just heard, that there is "no other baptism administered in your churches, but the baptism of believers : " nor will it relieve the matter for any to say that it is added, "or those who are accounted such upon their personal profession." This is all that we contend for as answering the rule : for we do not pretend absolutely to know, that those whom we baptize are *real believers*, only we account them such upon their personal profession. Nor can it be considered as an exception, what is further added, 'That they are believers "in the repute of the church : " for no church could consistently *repute* a person to be a believer, without rational evidence that he was such. But the last expression seems to carry the matter to a degree of certainty ; That they are believers in "God's gracious acceptance : " for although persons may profess, and churches may account them to be believers ; yet certainly God, as he cannot be deceived, will not *accept* any as such, but those who are so in reality.

We will next take notice of that very scriptural account given by Dr. Hopkins. When describing the subjects of baptism, he says, "The proper subjects of baptism, if adult, are those who, by profession and appearance, are believers in Christ and true friends to him. None but they who are really such, do in heart *put on Christ* : They must therefore be really holy, in order to put on this visibility and profession of it, with propriety and truth, which they do in baptism : for if they be not really such, they are utterly unqualified in the sight of God, to be admitted to baptism, as it is, on their part, only a piece of hypocrisy. Therefore none are to be admitted to this ordinance, but those who, in the view of the church, appear to be true friends to Christ or believers in him, and really holy, and are justly considered by them as such, who can judge only by outward appearance, and cannot certainly know the heart.

“ That none but such, who are thus visibly, and in the charitable judgment of the church, and of those who administer this ordinance, believers in Christ and really holy, are the proper subjects of this ordinance, and to be admitted to baptism, *is abundantly evident from scripture*, as well as from the nature of the transaction, and the reason of things. The apostles, when they first began to administer Christian baptism, and form a church, baptized none but such who *gladly received the word*. When the eunuch desired to be baptized, Philip said, *If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest*. This implies that he was not qualified for baptism, or a fit subject of that ordinance, unless he were a true believer in Christ: and that he could not baptize him, unless he professed and appeared to be such a believer. Hence all who were baptized, and formed into churches, were considered and addressed by the apostles, in their letters to them, as saints or holy persons, believers in Christ, and friends to him; as those who were saved, and heirs of eternal life; or, which is the same, as real Christians; of which every one must be sensible, who reads the Acts of the apostles, and their epistles.”\* *These are words fitly spoken, and are like apples of gold, in pictures of silver.*

If indeed it be evident from scripture, and in the charitable judgment of the church, “ That none but such, who are thus visibly believers in Christ and really holy are the proper subjects of this ordinance, and to be admitted to baptism,” as has just been asserted; and, that the apostles, when they first began to administer Christian baptism, and form a church, baptized none but such who *gladly received the word*, we can but wonder that a body of Christians who profess to take the WORD OF GOD, as their only rule of faith and practice, should blame us for so nearly imitating those first builders of the Christian church! For had the gentleman but now quoted, been giving a narrative of the *sentiments* and *practice* of the Baptist churches at the present day, he could not have given an account dissimilar, without contradicting sober fact. If it should be objected to what

\* System of Divinity, Part II. Chap. v. p. 305, 306.

has now been said, that the preceding is only an account of the true qualifications of adults, it will be readily granted, and at the same time asserted, that the Bible knows but of one kind of qualifications in candidates for baptism; it knows nothing of *higher* and *lower*, of *positive* and *negative* qualifications.

“Neither the forerunner, nor the apostles of Christ have said any thing on which such a distinction can be founded; as they insisted on repentance and faith as necessary in order to acceptance with God, and remission of sins, so they insisted upon the *profession* of them, in order to their being admitted into the *visible* kingdom or church of Christ. They baptized none, but upon this ground. Those who appeared, to a judgment of charity, to have these qualifications, they admitted to baptism, and those only.” “In a word, from the whole tenor of the New Testament, it is plain, that nothing less or lower than a profession of faith and true repentance was required in order to a person’s enjoying the privilege of *baptism*.” And “the distinction of *higher* and *lower* qualifications for the two ordinances, and the notion of *negative evidences* being a sufficient qualification for *baptism*, was never learnt from the New Testament, but is, doubtless, of human invention.”\*

Evidence of this kind might be multiplied, but it is hoped that what has been offered will give full satisfaction. We hope we shall not be thought obstinate if we should still say, That we think the scripture abundantly justifies the observation, *That professed believers are the only proper subjects of baptism*. If you should repeat your former query, ‘Whether that is any evidence that infants were not also baptized?’ you will not think the request unreasonable, if we should call on you to make out scripture proof, that ever *one* infant was baptized, by Christ or his apostles. Should you *assert* it without proof, it will be thought a sufficient answer to *deny* it without.

We should now be prepared, in a direct way, to treat upon the *Mode* of baptism, were it not for an objection you have made against St. John’s baptism, which it may be necessary first to consider.

\* Dr. Robbins’s Reply to Mr. Cotton’s Essays. p 6, 7.

## SECTION III.

*Whether JOHN's Baptism belonged to the Jewish or Christian Dispensation, particularly considered.*

YOU ask (p. 10) 'By what authority do you make immersion essential to the ordinance of baptism, in contradistinction to other modes and circumstances?' I answer, By the *authority* of God's word, and the confessed meaning of the Greek verb (*baptizo*,) to baptize.

You have endeavoured to evade part of the scripture evidence in favour of immersion, by suggesting that the baptism administered by John was not *Christian* baptism. Your objections are the following. You say, 'We have no reason to suppose that John baptized in all respects agreeably to the *Christian mode* of baptism.' But why not? Because, 'it is pretty evident, that he did not baptize in the name of the Trinity.' But suppose, Sir, he had baptized in the name of *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*, it would afford no argument in favour of a different *mode*, or any reason to suppose that the *act* of baptizing was not the same. John and the apostles baptized among the same people; hence it is most likely they understood the *word* in the same sense. In support of your observation, you mention the instance in the nineteenth chapter of Acts. From which you infer, that the twelve disciples would certainly have heard of the Holy Ghost, and would not have been again baptized, had John's baptism and the Christian institution been the same.

It appears evident that the question did not respect the *ordinary influences*, or *name* of the Holy Ghost: for, they could not be believers without the *former*, nor John's disciples without having heard of the *latter*. John expressly declared, at the time of his baptizing, That One should come after him mightier than he, who should baptize with the HOLY GHOST and *fire*. This was the subject of Paul's inquiry, and had reference only to the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, the bestowment of which they had not yet heard. But, you



ask, 'Why were these disciples again baptized?' I shall not undertake to tell why, nor do I believe that they were. I see nothing in the reading which requires this construction: for the passage before us appears not to be Luke's account of Paul, but Paul's account of John's doctrine and baptism. For it is written, *Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, (that is, the people whom John taught) they were baptized (by John) in the name of the Lord Jesus.* This concludes Paul's account of John. The historian then takes notice of Paul's conduct, that *when he had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.*

You seem to think that these disciples were re-baptized by Paul in the Christian mode; but did you observe, Sir, that the *Holy Ghost* is not mentioned in the form of administration here recorded? It is only said, *They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

That the reader may not consider us to be partial in the explanation now given, I would observe that many eminent Pædobaptists have understood it in the same light which we do. I shall mention but two or three, as sufficient to my present purpose. Dr. Robins, when speaking of John's baptism, has the following remark upon this passage; "When they heard this, they were baptized IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS; that is, they were baptized by John himself."\*

In perfect agreement with this are the sentiments of Mr. Poole. "*When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; that is, the disciples, or those that John preached to, who, when they heard what the Baptist said in the foregoing verse, were baptized.*" "As for Paul's imposing his hands upon them who are said to be baptized, it might very well be: That the twelve disciples might have been baptized by John, and now receive the Holy Ghost in these extraordinary gifts by the laying on of the hands of St. Paul: For to what end should these disciples, who had

been baptized with St. John's baptism, be again baptized by Paul?" He further adds, "It is evident that the apostles themselves were only baptized with the baptism of John, for there were none else to baptize them."\*

As in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established, I will only add the opinion of Calvin. Speaking of these twelve disciples, he saith, "Whereas therefore they answer that they know not whether there be any Holy Ghost, it is to be understood as if they had said, they have not yet heard whether the graces of the Spirit, of which Paul asked them, were given to the disciples of Christ. But I grant that *that* was the *true* baptism of John's, and all one and the self-same with the baptism of Christ; but I deny that they were baptized again." And in another place he saith, "Whereby also it is made most certain, that the ministry of John was altogether the same which was afterwards committed to the apostles. For the different hands wherewith it was administered, make not the baptism different; but, the same doctrine sheweth it to be the same baptism. John and the apostles agree in one doctrine; both baptized into repentance, both into the forgiveness of sins, both into the name of Christ."†

Should it still be insisted upon, that they were re-baptized by Paul, it will by no means help your argument, unless proved, that they were *sprinkled*, or had water poured on them, instead of being immersed. To allow that they were re-baptized, will still be in our favour, and vindicate our conduct in baptizing those who have not been baptized according to the Christian mode.

In concluding your remarks upon this head, you say, 'John's baptism was both begun and ended under the Jewish dispensation.' But, may I not inquire by what authority you assert this? Was there any thing in the manner of John's ministry, which resembled a Jewish

\* Vid. Pol. in loc.

† Institut. Christ. Relig. Lib. IV. Chap. xv. § 18, 7.

*priest* ? Or was there any thing in the Jewish *ritual* that required John to baptize repenting sinners in *Jordan* ? If so, you will oblige us in making it appear.

If John's baptism belonged to the Jewish dispensation, why were the chief priests and elders so surprisingly ignorant of it, that when Christ asked them, *Whether it were from heaven or of men*, they said, *We cannot tell* ?\* You will please to observe, that the persons to whom Christ put this question, were not the ignorant multitude, but the *chief priests* and *elders*, and it had particular reference to the authority by which John baptized ; which, if received from them, they must certainly have known it, and it would have been much to their advantage in this pinching case to have owned it.

But, Sir, when you say, ' John's ministry was under the Jewish dispensation,' you evidently mean, that he belonged to it. If so, he must have been inaugurated according to their ritual, or otherwise be considered as an impostor. But do the sacred pages any where teach us to believe, that John ever passed under those *consecrating* ceremonies, or was ever clad with a priestly vestment ? Or, do you consider him only as a prophet of that dispensation ? If John belonged to the Old Testament dispensation, why did not the translators place him with the Jewish prophets ? By finding him in the New, the ' ignorant and inattentive' will be apt to suppose he belongs to this dispensation.

But, is it not abundantly evident, that the Jewish clergy considered John as introducing a new dispensation ? That this was the case, and that the matter may stand in a fair light, let us consider what is written, John i. 19—25. *The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, (John) Who art thou ? And he confessed, and denied not ; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elias ? And he saith, I am not.† Art thou that prophet ? (or a prophet ?) And*

\* Matt. xxi. 25.

† It may be observed, that the Jews were thought to have imbibed the Pythagorean philosophy, which taught the doctrine of transmigration ; therefore, when they asked John whether he was Elias, their meaning was this, whether the soul of Elias were not now come in

he answered, No. Then said they unto him, *Who art thou?* He said, *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Esaias.* And they asked him, *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?*

These inquiries, made by the Jewish clergy respecting *John's baptism*, abundantly manifest two things: 1. That they were totally ignorant of John's being a minister of their dispensation. 2. That they expected, when either Elias or Christ came, they would introduce a new state of things.

Now as John had come baptizing with water, in a way different from all the requirements of the ceremonial law, and by an authority unknown to them, they reasonably concluded that he must be *one* or the *other* of those persons they were looking for.

I will to add two passages of scripture, as fully confirming the above observations. The first is Luke xvi. 16. *The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached and every man presseth into it.* This observation made by Christ, cannot reasonably be referred to John's *birth* or *death*; but evidently respects the beginning of his ministry: for then he began to preach the kingdom of God, and to proclaim the advent of the Saviour; and men in multitudes flocked to this new dispensation, called the kingdom of God. The other passage is, Mark i. 1—4. **THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST the Son of God:** *As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*

Thus, Sir, the Evangelist here calls John's ministry *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.* But you inform your readers, that it was under, or belonged to the Jewish dispensation. It will now be left to the im-

another body? To which John answered no. But Christ told his disciples that Elias had already come, not in the Jewish, but in a true sense.



partial to judge, whether, for the sake of supporting a particular hypothesis, you have not erred from the truth. And although you conclude that every 'candid inquirer' must view the matter in the same light which you do, it is very possible that some who are entitled to that character, may differ from you.

But, Sir, you have left your readers still under one difficulty respecting the matter. As you deny that *John's ministry* belonged to the Christian dispensation, you have not informed them when that began. From the analogy of your reasoning, we must suppose you begin it at the death of Christ.

You will now permit me to inquire, whether the baptism administered by the apostles of Christ before his death was Jewith baptism? Or, which dispensation it belonged to? Or, whether to neither? It is said, John iii. 22—24, *After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there: For John was not yet cast into prison. The Pharisees also heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.)* This baptism was cotemporary with John's, and undoubtedly under the same dispensation.

But will Christians in general be willing to allow, that both Jesus and John were ministers of the legal dispensation? And that the ordinances instituted, and administered by them, belonged to that dispensation? I said *ordinances*; for, if baptism is to be considered in this light, undoubtedly the sacred Supper is to be viewed upon the same footing; for, this was instituted and administered by Christ before his death, and never instituted by him afterwards.

As Christ was the same divine person before his death, that he was after he arose, it was by his appointment and authority, that his disciples were sent to *teach and baptize*. They did not receive their commission from the chief priests, but from Jesus. And John's preaching and baptism were as independent of the Jewith dispensation as that of the disciples of Christ.

The authority by which John the *Baptist* acted, both in preaching and baptizing, is expressly declared by the Evangelist John, chap. i. verse 6. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, &c.* What St Paul said of his commission to preach, with a little variation may be said of John's: *For he neither received it of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Neither went he up to Jerusalem, to them which were in the priest's office before him;\** but he went into the wilderness of Judea, and entered upon the work he was appointed unto, by him who sent him to baptize with water.†

The Jewish rulers knew nothing of John's baptism as belonging to their dispensation; you know nothing of its belonging to the Christian; and perhaps it might puzzle you both, to determine whether it was *from heaven or of men?*

Upon the whole, if the baptism administered by John, as the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that which was administered by the disciples of Christ, by his authority, and in his presence, were not *Christian baptism*, we know of none which is deserving of the name.

I have been more particular upon this point, because modern writers lay so much stress upon it. But it really appears, that to consider John's ministry as a part of the Jewish dispensation, is both unscriptural, and prejudicial to the *cause* of religion.

Finally, should it even be supposed, that there could be a distinction made between the baptism of John and the Christian institution, respecting the form of words used in the administration, it would by no means affect the case before us. For you will please to remember that the dispute is not about the *form* of words; but the *act* of baptizing. Hence if Mahomet had written his Koran in Greek, and had ordered his disciples to be baptized in his name; and had expressed the act by the same *Greek verb* by which Christian baptism is expressed; should we not reasonably conclude that they baptized in the same mode which Christians did, not-

\* Gal i. 11, 17.

† John i. 23.

withstanding the difference of *faith* and *names* into which they were baptized? Let candour judge, and I will abide the decision.

Therefore, until you, or some other person, shall prove that John's ministry belonged to the Jewish dispensation, we shall confide in the judgment of the Evangelist, that it was *the beginning of the gospel dispensation*. And consequently the *manner* of John's baptizing may be consistently urged to establish the *mode* of Christian baptism.

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## SECTION IV.

*The Mode of Baptism, and its Connexion with the Subject in Dispute, particularly considered.*

BAPTISM, like man in his primeval state, when it first came out of the hand of its institutor, was pure. But it has been basely contaminated, and perverted from its original design, to very different purposes. It is no longer dependent on original institution; but can *become all things to all men*, as circumstances may require.

It is evident, Sir, that you and I differ, both in opinion and practice, respecting the *mode of baptism*. I have ventured to say in my other Piece, that "baptism is to be administered only in one mode," and that "immersion is essential to the ordinance." You have given it as your opinion, (p. 10) 'That the *essence* of baptism does not consist in any one particular mode whatever;' and that 'it may be acceptably performed either by *sprinkling*, by *pouring on water*, or by *immersion*.' In the following page you add, 'It may be scrupled whether you, or any other man, can ascertain precisely the apostolic mode of baptism.' If this be indeed the case, then we may undoubtedly do as the children of Israel did when they had no king, every man what is right in his own eyes.

But, whether the subject be involved in so much uncertainty as you suggest, is worthy of serious inquiry. We cannot suppose you to be confident with regard to your own mode, nor that you will attempt to prove it to be apostolic ; unless you mean to emphasize the adverb ‘ *precisely*,’ and include in it all those trivial circumstances you have mentioned (p. 10.) : Such as, whether ‘ the subjects were put into the water backward or forward, or what length of time they kept them under water, or at what time they called the name of the Trinity over them,’ &c. But supposing it should be difficult to determine upon some of the circumstances you have mentioned, and we should possibly mistake one or more of them, would any reasonable person conclude, that such an omission would affect the validity of the ordinance, as much as to change it from *immersion* to *sprinkling* ?

But, Sir, you say the ‘ *essence of baptism* does not consist in any one particular mode whatever.’ What you mean by ‘ *essence*’ without, or independent of mode, or of any particular mode, appears unintelligible. For, if the *essence* of baptism can exist without the *instituted mode*, it can undoubtedly in any mode, or without any. But by what *chymical art* you extract the *essence* of baptism from the *mode*, you have not yet told us. We cannot suppose by *essence*, that you mean the *holy desires* or *gracious dispositions* of the subjects of baptism ; for, from the infant condition of the greater part of those whom you baptize, it is presumed there can be no evidence of their being possessed of such holy tempers. If by the *essence of baptism*, you mean the *form of words* used in the administration of it, then undoubtedly that must be considered valid where the due form of words is used, although *water* be wholly left out ; which if we may credit history, has been the case in several instances

In the dark ages of superstition, when new-born infants dying unbaptized were doomed to eternal death, a *priest* was obliged to attend at the call of a midwife ; and sometimes, when the infant was likely immediate-



ly to expire, they not having water prepared, made use of wine.\*

An instance is mentioned by Nicephorus, a Greek historian of the 14th century, of "a certain Jew, who, performing a journey in company with Christians, and being suddenly seized with a dangerous illness, earnestly desired baptism at the hands of his fellow travellers. They not having a priest in their company, and being destitute of water, were at first reluctant; but he conjuring them not to deny him the favour, they yielded to his request. On which, taking off his clothes, they sprinkled him thrice with *sand*, instead of water; adding that they *baptized him in the name of the Father*, and so on."† The same author informs us, both from Deylingius and Seckendorf, that a little before the reformation, there were, in Upper Saxony, and in some other places, those who taught and practised baptism, upon sickly new-born infants, with only using the baptismal form of words, without the application of water, in any form whatever! "To BAPTIZE, by sprinkling a *few drops* of water; to BAPTIZE, by sprinkling of *sand* without any water; to BAPTIZE, by merely pronouncing a *form of words*; what an improvement upon the institution of Christ!"‡

"In the twelfth century, a council in Ireland ordained, that children should be baptized in *pure* water by trine immersion; but, as a history of facts cannot be collected from mere laws, it may be observed, that some of the Irish baptized by plunging their children into *milk*, and were superstitious enough to imagine, that every part so plunged became invulnerable."§

I might go on to multiply instances of this kind, but the preceding are sufficient to show the absurdity of placing the *essence* of baptism in a mere *form of words*.

Although we would not attempt, or even wish to dictate to our Pædobaptist brethren with regard to their

\* Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 442.

† Apud Centur. Magdeburg. Cent. ii. c. vi. p. 82. in Booth's Pædo. Exam. p. 144.

‡ Ibid. p. 145.

§ Godolphin's Repertorium, in Robinson's History,

practice ; yet we claim it as a privilege, to judge for ourselves what is essential. Christians in different periods have had their different opinions of it. Tertullian in the beginning of the third century, and Agrippinus, and Cyprian after him, with many more, rebaptized those who came to them, not merely because they had been baptized by heretics, (as they were pleased to call them) but because they lacked what they considered essential to the ordinance : for they “ considered the probity and good faith of the person baptized the very *essence* of baptism ; and if a professor of Christianity were an unholy man, they adjudged his baptism like his profession, vain and invalid, and himself not a weak believer of Christianity, but a mere unprincipled pagan.”\*

The *Council of Nice*, in the 4th century, seemed to consider the *essence* of baptism as consisting in the form of words used in the administration ; and accordingly directed, that such as came to them from the Paulianists, both men and women, should be re-baptized, because the ordinance had not been administered in the name of the Trinity : while they admitted the Novatians with only laying on of hands.

The Bohemians considered the *essence* of baptism as consisting in the virtue or competency of the administrator ; and consequently re-baptized those who had every other requisite of baptism, only a corrupt administrator.

The Greeks place the *essence* of baptism in dipping in water ; and had a person been sprinkled ever so decently in any period of life, they would not therefore think him baptized ; because, in their opinion, to baptize is to dip, and nothing else.†

The Baptist churches in America, and those of Great Britain, Poland, Lithuania, Transylvania, and many more, all hold that immersion in water, and a personal profession of faith and repentance, are essential to baptism.

But, Sir, whatever you are pleased to consider as essential to baptism, *that* being omitted, would undoubt-

\* Ibid 461.

† Vide Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 463, 464.

edly invalidate the ordinance in your view ; at least this is the case with us. And why we should think some circumstances essential to baptism which you do not, will more fully appear in the sequel.

Many writers on your side of the question, have endeavoured to prove Christian baptism to have had its origin in the washing of Jewish proselytes ; which may reasonably be considered as a Jewish *fable*, unknown in the ritual of *Moses*, or any part of the Old Testament. A practice not to be found in the writings of Josephus and Philo, those two great historians, but is principally taken from writers of a much later date, and particularly from the *Yad Chazaka* of Maimonides.\*

It is worthy of observation, that the Pædobaptist writers in this controversy, rarely, if ever, mention the baptism administered by John, unless in some negative sense, or to answer some arguments drawn from it against their sentiments. But the washing of Jewish proselytes is frequently mentioned, as an indisputable auxiliary to infant baptism, by many noted writers on that side.†

A question here naturally suggests itself to the mind ; Why do Pædobaptists go back to Jewish tradition, or forward to the death of the Saviour, in order to ascertain the origin of gospel baptism, and cautiously omit the first accounts given of it in the sacred history ? Perhaps the most natural answer is, because *that* appears incongruous with their practice. It will require a large stock of art and ingenuity, to persuade a candid inquirer that John baptized any beside *adults*, or administered the ordinance in any other way than by *immersion*. The particular places which he chose for the conveniency of baptizing must afford a strong argument in favour of immersion ; nor can there be a very rational account given of his conduct upon any other footing. Had John administered in the present popu-

\* A celebrated Jewish writer, who was the head of a famous school in Egypt, in the beginning of the twelfth century.

† Dr. Lightfoot, Dr. Wall, Dr. Lathrop of West Springfield, and others ; but scrupled by the learned Dr. Benson, and positively denied by others.

lar mode, I presume a single cask of water would have been sufficient for all he ever baptized !—and in whatever place people had lived, there could have been no want of water sufficient to baptize.

In order to evade the force of this argument, many things have been said. One time we are told, that Jordan was so shallow that there was not a sufficient depth of water to immerse, or bury a person in ; again, that the large quantity of water was necessary, for the people and their beasts to drink ; again, when John baptized in Enon *because* there was *much water* there, we are told that (*udatta polla\**) *many waters*, means many little springs, not sufficient to immerse in. Now as to the first of these, no person who is acquainted with that ancient geographical account drawn by the pen of inspiration, can possibly believe it. If any are at a loss, let them observe, that it was only fordable at particular places, as appears by Ehud, Gideon and the Gileadites taking those passages.† And also David's crossing it with his family in a ferry-boat.‡ As to the second observation, if there was much water, it was necessary to “ supply the multitudes that came to John's baptism, for drink for themselves, and their horses and camels ;”§ if John's preaching had been such, that it had broken up the city of Jerusalem, and collected all the people from the region round about, and they had all gathered to him in one day, yet still it would not be true, that they needed a river half as large as Jordan to have supplied them all with drink ; unless they had drank like like *Job's behemoth* !|| I do not remember ever to have heard, that when any large gathering of people has been proposed, either for a military review, or for the sacred purpose of an ordination, that they have once mentioned the propriety of having it near some large river or fountain of water, in order to accommodate the people and their horses for drink ; and yet it is highly probable, that upon some such occasion, there have been as many together as ever at one time collected round the *ancient Baptist*.

\* John iii. 23. † Judges iii. 28. vii. 24. xii. 6. ‡ 2 Sam. xix. 15—18. § Clark's defence of infant baptism, p. 436. || Job xl. 23.



The fact appears to be this, that John's ministry continued for a considerable time, and that the people from time to time went out to hear him, and often we may suppose he had crowded assemblies. It is said he preached in the *wilderness of Judea*, but he baptized in *Jordan*.

Having thus mentioned the places chosen by John, we shall next take notice of the place where Philip baptized the Eunuch, which you suppose to be a matter of necessity rather than choice; be that as it may, the account informs us,—*they came unto a certain water*; supposed by some to be a fountain in a town called Bethsora, or a river called Eleutherus, which in that road must be passed over.\*

Jerom describes the town of Bethsoron, and mentions the fountain in it, in which he saith, “the Acts of the apostles relate, that the Eunuch of queen Candace was baptized here by Philip.†

Borchardus is of opinion, that it was “*Nehel Escol*, that is, *The brook of the cluster*, from whence the spies carried the grapes. To the left of this valley, for the space of a mile, runs a river, in which Philip baptized the Eunuch of queen Candace, not far from Sicelech.”‡

Thus we have traced John and his candidates, and Philip and the Eunuch, to the water side; we are now prepared to consider the consequent action. It is said of John, that the people who went out to him, *were baptized of him IN Jordan*.—And Jesus, when he was baptized, *went up straightway OUT OF THE WATER*.§ It is added by Mark—*And it came to pass in these days, that Jesus came from Galilee, and was baptized of John IN Jordan, and straightway COMING UP OUT OF THE WATER*. It is said of Philip and the Eunuch, *they went down both INTO THE WATER, both Philip and the Eunuch*; and he baptized him; and when they were come up out of the water, *he went on his way rejoicing*.

\* Poole's Contin. in loc.

† De locis Hebræicis, fol. 89. 6.

‡ Descript. terræ Sanct. c. 9. in Dr. Gill in loc.

§ Matt. iii. 6. 16. Mark i. 9.

Now, Sir, can any person compare these accounts for a moment, and not see the manifest agreement in the *action* of John and Philip. Let the rite be performed in what mode soever, it is evident it was the *same* in the people whom John baptized, and in the Saviour, and in the Eunuch. You observe in this last instance, there is ‘no account of any particular mode whatever.’ I must take the liberty here again to dissent from you; for, I conclude it is a very particular account of the mode of plunging. Were you to be informed by a person of your acquaintance, that he saw a minister who was a stranger to him, go down into the water with a candidate, and that he baptized him, and that they came up out of the water, I am persuaded, without hesitation, you would conclude that they were Baptists; and the account here given would decide the point in your mind, and perhaps in any other person’s, in what *mode* the ordinance was administered. Again, if instead of saying they went down both into the water, it had been said that the candidate ascended, or was carried up the pulpit stairs, (which is now the custom in many places) it would afford a strong presumption in favour of affusion.

You observe the instance abovementioned is the only one, ‘recorded in scripture, of going to a river, pond, pool, or brook, to baptize with Christian baptism.’ Sir, you will please also to observe, that this is the only instance recorded, after the death of the Saviour, in which the *act* of baptizing is described; and here it evidently describes immersion.

But you say, ‘If we admit, according to our translation, that they both of them went down *into* the water, this is no evidence that either of them were plunged all under water. You will not suppose, that this text is a proof that Philip went all under water. But why not? If going into the water proves immersion, it proves that *both* were immersed; for they went down both into the water.’ To some of your readers, this criticism does not appear in the most logical light; for no person ever supposed, that for Philip and the Eunuch to go into the water up to the *knave* or *loins* would be

to immerse either ; but when they had got into the water, there was evidently something done to one, that was not done to the other ; i. e. Philip baptized or *immersed* the Eunuch ; but *he* did not baptize Philip. Therefore, for the sake of immersing the Eunuch, they went both into the water, as that could not be consistently performed without. In this light their going *into the water* will appear rational ; but in every other view, totally inconsistent. Had the object been only to *sprinkle* the Eunuch, this could have been performed at the water side, without going down into it ; yea, probably it might have been done decently in the chariot ; for it is most reasonable to suppose, that a person of his distinction and equipage would not travel that desert country, without some vessels to obtain and convey water, when he came to it ; unless he meant to serve himself in the way that Gideon's men did.

Upon the whole, does it not appear to be the most easy and natural construction of the passage, to suppose the baptism of the Eunuch to be an immersion ? I might here, if necessary, produce a cloud of witnesses from Pædobaptist expositors, full to my purpose ; but I omit them for the present. And although I would not address you in that full strain of assurance, which the great apostle did king Agrippa, yet I may modestly inquire, *Believest thou not these things thyself ? yea, I doubt not but thou believest.*

You take notice of this as a single instance, in which Christian baptism has the *appearance* of immersion. But, Sir, would you think it reasonable, that in every instance where it is said that persons were baptized, that all the circumstances relating to the *act*, should be particularly described ? Surely you could not. You might as reasonably suppose, that where *circumcision* is mentioned, and the *act* not formally described, that it was performed upon a different part, or in a different way from what the institution pointed out, as, that baptism was administered in a *different mode* from the specimens given of it.

It may be profitable here to reflect upon the subject a moment, and put a few circumstances together, which may afford some light in the present case.

When John, that bright morning star, appeared, to give knowledge of salvation, he came to prepare the way, and proclaim the approach of the Sun of righteousness. In order to this, he came preaching repentance for the remission of sins, and baptizing with (or *in*\*) water. The manner in which John baptized is so particularly described, that very few Christians, of any denomination, have doubted its being by immersion. This was the beginning of the institution ; therefore it was proper to describe it. The act was performed in Jordan. But, as the Baptist had informed the people, that there would one come after him mightier than he, who should baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire : therefore, to avoid the danger of a mistake which might possibly be made from this, in supposing that Christ, when he came, would introduce a different *mode* of baptism from what John practised, we are expressly told, not only that he was baptized by John, but that it was administered in the same way to him, as to the people. He, also, *was baptized in Jordan, and came up straightway out of it.*

After Jesus had passed in triumph through the dark domains of death, he came to his disciples vested with all power in heaven and earth, and, enlarging their commission, sent them to preach to Gentiles, as well as Jews ; with an express command, to baptize in the name of the triune God. Now, lest we should look for some alteration in the mode of baptism, it is again exemplified, and here we see it to be the same as before ; Philip and the candidate go down into the water, he is baptized, and they come up again out of it. Thus we see the baptism administered by John, in the beginning of the Christian dispensation, before Christ began his personal ministry ; and that administered to Christ himself ; and that administered after he gave the great commission, as to the *mode*, were uniformly the same.

From this, we think it rational to conclude, that those instances of baptism mentioned in the New Tes-

\* The preposition *en* might perhaps be better rendered *in*, as it is Matt. xii. 41. and many other places.



tament, where the act is not described, were performed in the same manner as these were, of which an account is given.

Incompetent as this evidence may appear to you, we think it a sufficient answer to your question, wherein you ask, by what authority we make immersion essential to baptism, &c. I would also assure you, that whenever you will make out as much proof from scripture for *sprinkling*, as being an instituted mode of baptism, as has now been produced in favour of *immersion*, I will lay down my pen, and forever drop the dispute.

Although what has been offered may be considered as ample proof of the question in dispute, yet being desirous of giving you full satisfaction, I shall proceed to lay before you one consideration more, which appears to us of considerable weight in the present case; and that is, the native signification of the Greek verb (*baptizo*) to baptize, which we suppose necessarily requires dipping. We are fully sensible, at the same time, that this sense has been controverted by many men of eminent abilities; notwithstanding, we think the evidence greatly preponderates in our favour. Nor shall we think it a difficult task to prove the sense for which we plead, from Pædobaptists themselves; and that too, from some as *learned* and *judicious* as any, whose names adorn the biographical page. This kind of evidence I conclude you can have no reasonable objection to, because you cannot suspect them of any design against themselves, nor will they make any concessions to sentiments which they oppose, further than truth obliges them to; therefore, I may say of their evidence in the present case, as David did of Goliath's sword, *there is none like it*.

I may have occasion hereafter to mention some writers of a much earlier date, but I shall here begin with Luther. In his translation of the New Testament, he has rendered the Greek word to baptize by the German *taufen*; and in his works he hath expressly declared, that the baptismal verb *taufen*, signifies to immerse, or to plunge into the water.\* Thus Matt. iii. 1.

\* Op. De bap. in Robinson's Hist. Bap. p. 442.

*Zuder zeit kam Johannes der tauffer ;*—In those days came John the dipper. To this we may add the testimony of the Genevan oracle, Calvin, who says, “The word *baptize* signifies to dip; and it is certain that the manner of dipping was used of the ancient church.”\* Shall I add to this, the testimony of that celebrated professor of divinity, Witsius? “It cannot be denied (saith he) that the native signification of the word *baptēin* and *baptizein*, is, to plunge, to dip.”† Full to the same point are also the words of Vitringa—“The act of baptizing is the immersion of believers in water. This expresses the force of the word. Thus also it was performed by Christ and his apostles.”‡

If you please, we will now look at the ancient Helvetia confession, first written in the year 1536, by or under the direction of Bucer, ten years before the death of Luther, and afterwards published again by the pastors of Zurich, in 1566; in which we have the following unequivocal declaration: “Baptism was instituted and consecrated by God, and the first that baptized was John, who DIPPED CHRIST IN THE WATER IN Jordan; from him it came to the apostles, who also did baptize with water.”

The confession of Saxony, written by Melancthon, in the year 1551, perfectly agrees with the above: I will now transcribe it. “Baptism is an entire action, to wit, a DIPPING, and the pronouncing of these words, *I baptize thee in the name of the Father,*” and so on.|| These two last are not to be considered merely as the testimony of two men, or two particular churches, but as including a number of churches in two large districts.

As Dr. Collins was justly esteemed a learned and critical expositor, you will perhaps be willing to hear his opinion in the present case. “A great part (saith he) of those who went out to hear John were *baptized*, that is, dipped in Jordan.” “To be baptized is to be *dipped in water*; metaphorically, to be plunged in afflic-

\* Institut. Christ. Relig. l. iv. c. xv. § 19.

† Œconom. Foed. l. iv. c. xvi. § 13.

‡ Aphorismi Sanct. Theolog. Aphorif. 884. in Booth.

|| Harmony of Confessions, p. 395, 404.

tions : I am, saith Christ, to be overwhelmed with sufferings and afflictions."\* To this we may add the testimony of Mr. Daniel Rogers : "None (saith he) of old were wont to be sprinkled ; and I confess myself unconvinced by demonstration from scripture for infant sprinkling. It ought to be the church's part to cleave to the institution, which is *dipping* ; and he betrays the church, whose officer he is, to a disorderly error, if he cleave not to the institution, which is to *dip*. That the minister is to dip in water as the meetest act, the word *baptizo* notes it. For the Greeks wanted not other words to express any other act beside dipping, if the institution could bear it." "To dip therefore is *exceeding material* to the ordinance ; which was the usage of old, without exception of countries, hot or cold."†

The above quotations are all made from Pædobaptist writers, to which I wish to add one observation from a late learned historian : "A linguist (says he) determines himself by his own knowledge of the Greek language, and an illiterate man, by the best evidence he can obtain from the testimony of others, whom by his condition he is obliged to trust.

"To the latter it is sufficient to observe, that the word is confessedly Greek, that native Greeks must understand their own language better than foreigners, and that they have always baptized, and do yet baptize, by immersion. This is an authority for the meaning of the word infinitely preferable to that of European lexicographers ; so that a man, who is obliged to trust human testimony, and who baptizes by immersion, because the Greeks do, understands a Greek word exactly as the Greeks themselves understand it ; and in this case the Greeks are unexceptionable guides, and their practice is in this instance safe ground of action."‡

This last remark is confirmed by Dr. Wall, who assures us that "the Greek church, in all the branches of it, in Europe, Asia, Egypt and Ethiopia, has always preserved

\* Poole's Contin. of Annot. on Matt. iii. 6, and xx. 22.

† Treatise of the two Sac. Part I. chap. v. and viii. in Booth's Pædobaptist Exam. p. 23.

‡ Robinson's History of baptism, p. 5, 6.

the custom of *dipping* infants in baptism, that were in health, and able to bear it.”\* By the term *always*, we must understand from the time when they first began to baptize infants.

I will not for the present trouble you with any more quotations from Pædobaptists, but will hold myself engaged to produce five times as many, whenever there shall be a reasonable demand. I conclude, if human testimony can establish any point, we must allow, from the disinterested nature of the evidence now considered, that the native signification of the Greek verb *baptizo*, (which must determine the proper sense of our English word to baptize) to be fairly settled.

Should it be objected that any, or all the persons above quoted, held, notwithstanding, that baptism might be lawfully administered, either by *pouring* or *sprinkling*, in ordinary, or at least in particular cases; this would by no means invalidate their evidence, with respect to the point in hand; it would only prove them inconsistent with themselves, and that they supposed that they had a right to depart from the instituted way, and adopt one which, in their view, appeared better calculated to serve the interests of religion.

Should we suppose a number of persons, of established veracity, to appear before a court of judicature, to give evidence upon oath in a certain case, and they should all jointly agree in confirming a particular fact; but at the same time should add, that it was their *opinion*, that there might be other circumstances connected with the attested fact, which, if true, would be equally important to the case in hand, although they could not be positively proved;—no person would be at a loss how to decide a case of this nature, nor would he put this supposititious evidence upon an equal footing with *sober fact*, unless he were governed by interest or prejudice.

Thus, Sir, we have traced the MODE of baptism up to its origin: and have found it first in the hands of John the Baptist, who had his commission from *heaven* †

\* Defence of the history of infant baptism, p. 148.

† John i. 6.



He administered it to the Saviour, and probably to the disciples,\* who by virtue of the great commission baptized others ; and wherever the *act* is described, it certainly has the appearance of immersion.

We have also heard the testimony of several celebrated writers, in establishing the meaning of the word *to baptize*. These declarations, taken from Pædobaptists, must always remain in our favour, notwithstanding all that may be said of their practising in a different way.

Hence we conceive that immersion, as the appointed mode of baptism, has been fairly made out, both from scripture and reason, and from the full concessions of the writers upon your own side. And if what has now been said, should not convince you or any of your brethren, yet it will undoubtedly suggest some of our reasons for differing from you in our practice.

If the mode of applying the water of baptism be indifferent, then the dispute is at an end ; but, if it be important, the necessity of one condemns the other. But to me it appears inconsistent to suppose, that there can be a positive command, and the *mode* of our obedience be indifferent ; for this at once takes off the authority of the command. Yet here, Sir, we have not the happiness to be agreed in opinion : for you suppose the matter to be indifferent, and attempt to illustrate it by the posture of the body in prayer. But a moment's reflection must convince you, that the cases are not parallel. The posture of the body makes no part of prayer, any more than the place does where the man is when he prays : for prayer is properly a mental exercise, and not immediately connected with any position of the body whatever. But this can by no means be said of the application of water in baptism : for this makes a material part of the ordinance, and is essential to its very existence.

If the institution require no more than to sprinkle a few drops of water in the face, any person must be strangely superstitious to be immersed. And on the other hand, if it does really require immersion, then

\* Chap. iii. 23.

those who only sprinkle must fall materially short, and have scarcely the shadow of the ordinance. To suppose that sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, are all indifferent, is in fact to suppose that nothing is commanded ; or at least no more than sprinkling.\* When persons believe this, there is an end to immersion : for men are not generally fond of doing more than is required. This, Sir, your practice demonstrates. You believe either way answers the institution ; but you, with other Pædobaptists in general, choose sprinkling ; I think it probable that I should do the same, could I be convinced that your views were right. It is also probable, that John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles, Philip, and the ancient Christians, had they viewed the matter in the same light which you do, would have invariably administered it by sprinkling : for there could have been no possible occasion which would have required immersion, in case the other way would equally well express the design.

From a careful retrospection of the arguments made use of in the course of this lengthy Section, the candid will be able to judge, whether we are unreasonable, in saying that *immersion* is essential to the right administration of the ordinance. That I have not exaggerated sober fact, will be made evident by a quotation which I shall now subjoin. Dr. Wall, who has before been mentioned, was so highly esteemed by the English clergy for his learning and zeal in defending infant baptism, that in a general convocation, Feb. 9, 1706, they passed the following vote ; “ Ordered, that the thanks of this house be given to Mr. Wall, Vicar of Shoreham in Kent, for the learned and excellent book he hath lately

\* The three terms in dispute are all used in Lev. ix. 6, 7. in the following manner : “ And the priest shall (*bapsei*) dip his finger in the blood, and (*prostranei*) sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord ; and shall (*ekibeeit*) pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar.”

That these rites were not the same and to be used indifferently, the following familiar transposition will abundantly show : And the priest shall pour his finger in the blood, and shall dip of the blood seven times before the Lord ; and shall sprinkle all the blood at the bottom of the altar.

† Septuaginta in loc.

written concerning infant baptism." Yet notwithstanding this gentleman's profound learning, and all the advantages he had derived from his painful researches into the remotest depths of antiquity, to procure materials of defence,—he was obliged to acknowledge, that Dr. Gale had drawn him into a dispute upon the mode of baptism, "wherein (saith he) *he* knew, that the examples of scripture and other antiquity, and the full persuasion of that people, and of all the Eastern church to this day, is on his side; and I had the disadvantage to plead for a way of baptism, of which the best I could say, was, that it was sufficient for the essence of baptism; but could not deny the other (except in the case of danger of health) to be the fittest."\* It must be acknowledged, that Dr. Wall was under most painful disadvantages in vindicating his cause: for he had not only to oppose the learned Dr. Gale, but the full conviction of his own mind, that scripture example, and the whole current of antiquity, were against him.

Upon the whole, this much is certain, that there is neither express command, nor example, either in the law of Moses, or in the gospel of Jesus Christ, to sprinkle water upon new-born infants as an initiating seal of any covenant whatever.† Therefore, we may say with Dr. Whitby, whose words shall close this Section—"The argument is always good: We read of no such doctrine in the scripture; therefore it neither is, nor can be, any *article of faith*, because we have no other rule of faith besides the holy scriptures."‡

\* Defence of the history of infant baptism, p. 404.

† The male children of the Jews were to be circumcised on the eighth day, by divine appointment; but past the middle of the third century, the honest Bishop Fidus wrote to Cyprian of Carthage, to know whether children might be baptized before they were eight days old; for by his Bible he could not tell. Nor could Cyprian tell, without first consulting a Council upon the subject. A presumptive evidence that the business was new. Primit. Christ. p. 193. and Robinson's history, p. 284.

‡ Annot. on Matt. vi. 9.

## SECTION V.

*The Mode of Baptism farther illustrated, from the Practice of the primitive Christians ; and the Manner in which it was reduced from Immersion to Sprinkling, briefly pointed out.*

MUCH has been already said upon the mode of baptism ; but as it is evidently a constituent part in the present *dispute*, it appears necessary to set it in the clearest light. Hence we shall proceed to consider the practice of the ancient Christians.

The primitive Christians not only understood the word in the sense for which we plead, but they practised accordingly. This has been touched upon already, but will be more fully illustrated in what follows.

Dr. Cave, who wrote about a hundred and twenty years ago, (not particularly as a disputant, but as a historian) in describing the religion of the fathers, after mentioning several things which they connected with baptism, he saith ; “ The action having proceeded thus far, the party to be baptized was wholly *immersed* or put under water, which was the almost universal custom of those times, whereby they did more notably and significantly express the *three great ends* and effects of baptism ; for as in immersion there are in a manner three several acts, the *putting* the person into the water, his *abiding* there for a little time, and his *rising* again ; so by these were represented *Christ's death, burial, and resurrection* to a new course of life. By the person's being put into the water, was lively represented the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh ; by his abode under it, which was a kind of burial in the water, his entering upon a state of death or mortification ; like as Christ remained for some time under the state or power of death ; therefore as many as are baptized into Christ, are said to be baptized into his death, and to be buried with him by baptism into death, that the old man being crucified with him, the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth he might not serve



sin ; for he that is dead is freed from sin, as the apostle clearly explains the meaning of this rite. And then, by his emersion, or rising up out of the water, was signified his entering upon a new course of life.”\*

The words of Mr. Locke are very similar to the above ; “ We Christians (saith he) who by baptism were admitted into all the kingdom and church of Christ, were baptized into a similitude of his death ; we did own some kind of death by being BURIED UNDER WATER ; which being buried with him, i. e. in conformity to his burial, as a confession of our being dead, was to signify, that as Christ was raised up from the dead into a glorious life with his Father, even so we, being raised from our typical death and *burial* in baptism, should lead a new sort of life, wholly different from our former, in some approaches towards that heavenly life that Christ is risen to.”†

Mr. Burkit also, fully acknowledges this to be the practice of the ancient church, when he says, “ The apostle no doubt alludes to the ancient manner and way of baptizing persons in those hot countries, which was by immersion, or putting them under water for a time, and then raising them up again out of the water ; which rite had also a mystical signification, representing the burial of our old man sin in us, and our resurrection to newness of life.”‡ Mr. Poole’s words are nearly verbatim.§

But, Sir, you are sensible that very few expositors have written concerning the practice of the first Christian church, who have not acknowledged, that it was the almost universal custom of those times to baptize by *immersion*. This fact will manifest itself as we proceed.

You will undoubtedly recollect, that the first instances to be met with in ancient history, wherein they pretended to baptize otherwise than by immersion, were in cases of supposed *necessity* ; and considered

\* Primitive Christianity, Part I. chap. x. p. 203, 204. Edit. 7.

† Paraphrase on Rom. vi. 3, 4.

‡ Expository Notes on Rom. vi. 4.

§ Poole in loc.

even in those cases as not fully answering the institution.

The baptizing of *sick* or *dying* persons by affusion, originated in the third century\* (a period fruitful of religious inventions) and had its foundation in error.

Several things united in bringing it into existence : as, 1. Misconstruing that passage of the apostle where it is said, *If they who have once been enlightened, (which at this time, by many, was understood of baptism) shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.* This led Constantine, and many other serious persons, to delay their baptism until near the close of life. 2. Another sentiment equally erroneous arose, from a misapplication of the words of Christ—*Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* Thus on the one hand, they fearing a fatal relapse after baptism, and on the other, (as Dr. Cave observes) “Not daring to pass into another world without this *badge* of their initiation into Christ, they presently signified their earnest desire to be baptized, which was accordingly done, as well as the circumstances of a sick bed would permit. These were called *Clinici*, (of whom there is frequent mention in the ancient writers of the church) because baptized as they lay along in their beds.” “This (continues the Doctor) was accounted a less *solemn* and perfect kind of baptism ; partly because it was done not by *immersion*, but by *sprinkling*, partly because persons were supposed at such a time to desire it chiefly out of fear of death.”† This kind of baptism was considered so imperfect, that if the persons recovered, they were by the Neocæsarean Council, rendered ordinarily incapable of being admitted to the degree of *presbyters* in the church.

We have a fair specimen of this in the instance of Novatus, the Greek philosopher.‡ According to Eusebius, “he fell into a grievous distemper, and it being supposed that he would die immediately, he received baptism (being *besprinkled* with water) on the bed where-

\* Robinson's history, p. 449.

† Primitive Christianity, Part I. c. 16. p. 196.

‡ Sometimes called Novatianus.

on he lay : (*if that can be called baptism.*)\* Thus it appears, that this ancient Father will hardly allow *sprinkling* to be called baptism. This took place near the middle of the third century, and serves to show in what light *sprinkling*, even in *cases of necessity*, was viewed in that day.

It may afford us further light in our present inquiries, to consider the case of Constantine. He has generally been honoured as the first Christian Emperor. But if according to your argument, a man is not to be considered as a Christian without baptism, then he must be looked upon as a *heathen*, long after he fought under the *banner of the cross* ; and consequently, must be considered as a Christian but a few hours before his death. But, to suppose this, is to suppose, that baptizing a man makes him a Christian, which is too absurd to be admitted in this enlightened period. We may as well argue that the *epaulette* worn by an *officer*, is what makes him an officer ; as, that baptism makes the person baptized a Christian. Whereas a person must be an officer before he can have any right to wear the *badge* ; so a person ought to be a Christian, before he takes upon him the sacred badge of *that* profession.

It appears that Constantine was brought to believe the Christian doctrine in the beginning of his reign, which continued upwards of thirty years ; but he was not baptized until a little before his death.\* Being at this time in an ill state of health, he repaired to the warm baths at Constantinople ; but his complaints increasing, he went from thence to Helenopolis, and from thence to the suburbs of Nicomedia ; where he called the Bishops together, and spake to them in the following manner : “ This was the time long since hoped for by me, when I thirsted and prayed, that I might obtain salvation in God. This is the hour, wherein even we may also enjoy that seal which confers immortality. I had heretofore taken a resolution of doing this in the stream of the *river Jordan*, where our Saviour himself,

\* Eccl. Hist. lib. vi. c. xlii. p. 113.

† He was proclaimed Emperor in the 1st year of the 271 Olympiad, or A. D. 305.

in likeness to us, is recorded to have partaken of the laver.\* After this we are told, that they performed the rites, and completed the divine ceremonies. It is a given point that he was baptized by immersion; but, if it had then been considered as a matter of such indifference, as is plead for in the present day, he would undoubtedly have excused himself from going *into* the water, in his ill state of health.

This instance must carry a degree of evidence to every unprejudiced mind, in favour of immersion: for in this we have the opinion of this great man, in what *mode* the Saviour was baptized; and of his determination to *imitate* him in it, both as to the manner and place.†

Perhaps some into whose hands these sheets may fall, may wish to be informed, how immersion came to be laid aside, and another *rite* so entirely different, gener-

\* Euseb. Life of Constantine, lib. iv. chap. lxii.

† It is abundantly evident, that many persons who were born of Christian parents, and educated in the Christian faith, were not baptized until they came to *adult* years, and made a personal profession.

Helena, the mother of Constantine, was a very devout and zealous Christian, yet he was not baptized upon her faith. Nor did he dedicate his own children to God in baptism by virtue of *his* faith: for we are informed by Socrates, that his son Constantius, who succeeded his father in the empire, was baptized by Euzoius when he was preparing for his expedition against Julianus, and immediately after ended his life at Mopsucrania, twenty-five years after the death of his father. Eccl. History, lib. ii. chap. xlvii.

Basil, the son of Basil, bishop of Nicene, was baptized in Jordan when far advanced in years.

Gregory the great, the son of Gregory, bishop of Nazianzen, was born while his father was bishop, and yet not baptized until he was twenty, some say thirty years old. See Oslander's Book, Cent. iv. l. 3, and Robinson's History, p. 250.

Gregory says, that Chrysostom was born of believing parents, and was educated by Melitius, a bishop, yet not baptized till the age of twenty-one.

Erasmus testifies, that Jerom was born in the city of Shydon, of Christian parents, was brought up in the Christian religion, and was baptized in the thirtieth year of his age.

Vossius affirms, that Nectarius was chosen bishop of Constantinople before he was baptized.

Theodosius, the emperor, was born in Spain; his parents were both Christians, and from his childhood had been trained up in the Nicene faith; was baptized at Thessalonica, by Achalio, when he was upwards of thirty years old. Vide Junius, junior, p. 68. Rob. p. 250.



ally practised in its room? In answer to this, the reader is desired to call to mind what has already been said, that sprinkling first made its appearance in Africa, in the third century, in favour of Clinicks or bed-ridden people. But even African Catholics derided it, and reputed it no baptism, or at least a very imperfect one.\* They considered it only as a substitute in cases of imminent danger, where baptism in the instituted way could not with safety be administered. Sprinkling in these cases, appears to have been in use several centuries before pouring was ever practised for baptism.

The first appearance of baptizing by *pouring* (which has occurred in my reading) was in the eighth century; when Pope Stephen III. allowed the validity of such a baptism of infants in danger of death.

The question proposed to him was, Whether in *case of necessity* occasioned by illness of an infant, it were lawful to baptize by *pouring* water out of the hand, or a cup, on the head of the infant? Stephen answered, if such a baptism were performed, in such a case of necessity, in the name of the holy Trinity, it should be held valid.

The learned Basnage makes several remarks on the canon of Stephen, referred to above. "Although (saith he) it is accounted the first law for sprinkling, yet it doth not forbid dipping: that it allows sprinkling only in cases of imminent danger: that the authenticity of it is denied by some Catholics: that many laws were made after this time in Germany, France, and England, to compel dipping, and without any provision for cases of necessity: therefore, that this law did not alter the *mode* of dipping in public baptisms. And that it was not until five hundred and fifty-seven years after, that the legislature, in a council at Ravenna, in the year thirteen hundred and eleven, declared *dipping*, or *sprinkling indifferent*."†

There was indeed in some parts of the Christian church, long before this, such a ceremony as *pouring*

\* Jo. Andrea Bosii de clinicis exercit. Hist. Jence.

† Jacobi Basnagii, Monumenti. Vol. I. Præfat. cap. v. § 4. De canone Stephani III. Papæ. in Robinson.

water upon the head, but was distinct from baptism, and like exorcism considered only as a preparation. This pouring was called *capitulavium*, or washing of the head ; and was usually performed on Palm Sunday upon the competents, as a preparatory to baptism.

If history can establish any fact, it undoubtedly does this, that baptism was universally administered by *immersion* in the whole Christian Church (except in cases of necessity as above) for thirteen hundred years together ; and continued so in the English nation until about the middle of the sixteenth century. And how the change was made in the English church, we are sufficiently informed by Dr. Wall. " Calvin (saith he) was, I think, the first in the world, that drew up a form of liturgy, that prescribed *pouring water* on the infant, absolutely without saying any thing of *dipping* (this was done in the year 1556.) It was his admirers in England, who in queen Elizabeth's time, brought *pouring* into ordinary use, which before was used only to weak children. But the succeeding Presbyterians in England, about the year 1664, (when their reign began) went farther yet from the ancient way ; and instead of *pouring*, brought into use in many places *sprinkling*. Declaring at the same time against all use of fonts, baptisteries, &c."\*

I wish to add one remark more from Dr. Wall under this head. " There has (saith he) no novelty or alteration, that I know of, in point of baptism, been brought into our church, but in the *way* or *manner* of administering it. The way that is now ordinarily used, we cannot deny to have been a novelty, brought into this church by those that learned it in Germany, or at Geneva. And they were not content to follow the example of pouring a quantity of water, (which had *there* been introduced instead of immersion) but improved it (if I may so abuse that word) from pouring to sprinkling ; that it might have as little resemblance of the ancient way of baptizing as possible."†

\* Defence of the History of Infant Baptism, p. 146.

† Ibid. p. 403, 404.

This indefatigable historian has assigned two reasons for this alteration, which are as follow ; " I must own in the first place, that many of the clergy seem to be of the opinion of the late bishop of Salisbury, that the coldness of our climate is a good reason to change *dipping* into *pouring*." Upon which he observes, " That our climate is no colder than it was for those thirteen or fourteen hundred years from the beginning of Christianity here, to queen Elizabeth's time, and not near so cold as Muscovy, and some other countries, where they do still *dip* their children in baptism, and find no inconvenience in it."\* Although this, with many, might be accounted a sufficient reason for the alteration, the Doctor supposes the following had more influence. That " It was not the coldness of the climate, but the imitation of Calvin and the church at Geneva, and some others thereabouts."

Thus, Sir, from the observations now made, we clearly see what was the practice of the ancient Christians ; and how the alteration has been brought about. If the *facts* now related by Dr. Wall are true, (and he is certainly supported by the current testimony of history) I hardly think you will again ask, *By what authority we make immersion essential to baptism.*

As *sprinkling* is acknowledged to be a *novelty* by those who practise it, and that it was brought in, in " *imitation of Calvin,*" and not in " *imitation of the baptism of Jesus Christ,*" we do not see our way clear to acknowledge the validity of it. The advice given to Israel of old may be applied in the present case ; *Thus saith the*

\* It is probable the following incident had not taken place when the Doctor wrote his defence, or he would have made an exception.

It is said by an English historian, that at Petersburg they sometimes baptize their children in a river or canal, by cutting a hole through the ice, upon which he observes, " I have heard that a priest, in immersing a child, (for baptism is performed by the immersion of the whole body) let it slip, through inattention, into the water. The child was drowned ; but the holy man suffered no consternation. " *Give me another,*" said he, with the utmost composure, " *for the Lord hath taken that to himself.*" The Empress, however, having other uses for her subjects, and not desiring that the Lord should have any more, in that way, at least, gave orders that all children to be baptized in the hole in the river should henceforth be let down in a basket." W. Richardson's *Anecdotes of the Russian Empire*, p. 335. in Robinson.

*Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, aske for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein ; and ye shall find rest for your souls.\**

## SECTION VI.

*Godly Sincerity, as connected with external Obedience, considered.*

IN my other Piece, I have a few times used the term *sincere*, and its substantive *sincerity*. I have said, that “sincerity is not the term of communion, but being conformed to the apostles’ doctrine, and continuing steadfastly therein.” I have also said, that “whatever we practise which is not according to the will of Christ, is contrary thereto ; although we be ever so sincere in doing it.” To this you reply, ‘If I rightly conjecture, it exhibits a sentiment which is false in its nature, pernicious in its consequences, and a first principle of your mistake respecting close communion.’ Sir, if your *conjecture* be right, we are now in a fair way to get at the root of the difficulty. You however acknowledge the first part of the sentence, “that whatever we practise which is not according to the will of Christ, is contrary thereto :” This, you say, ‘is very plain and good doctrine ;’ but when I added, although we be *ever so sincere*, you say, I present a difficulty. Really, Sir, it appears to me as you construe the passage, it presents a much greater difficulty : for, if an act were really disagreeable to the will of Christ, and our performing it in sincerity would render it agreeable, we must suppose his will to be dependent on the sincerity of his creatures ; if so, his will cannot be a rule of conduct for us, but we must be governed by our own sincerity.

That we may not dispute about words rather than sentiments, it may be proper here to settle the meaning

\* Jer. vi. 16.

of the term *sincere*. You allow that ‘the word is ambiguous in the customary use of it;’ but conclude, ‘as it is used in scripture, it generally, if not invariably, implies or intends pure and upright affections of heart.’ That it is used in this sense in the epistle to the Philippians, will be granted; but, that it is used in somewhat of a different sense by the apostle Peter, must also be acknowledged: For he speaks of the *sincere milk of the word*, which being of the neuter gender, does not include affections of any kind. These two, are perhaps the only instances in scripture, in which this adjective is used, except in the marginal reading.

But should it even be granted that the word, when used in scripture, is constantly used in the sense for which you plead; will you hence argue that I am obliged to use it in this sense? Have I not a right to use it according to common acceptation? Surely I have not mentioned *godly*, or *scripture sincerity*. I have indeed annexed the adverb *ever*, to sincere; which you are pleased to say, ‘extends to all kinds and to all degrees of sincerity.’ But have you, by the fair rules of criticism, a right to this conclusion? Most certainly you have not. It will be allowed, that the term used will extend to the highest degree; but by no means determines the kind or quality of sincerity.

Should you agree to meet a friend tomorrow evening at eight o’clock, and should say, ‘I will not fail of being there although it should be *ever* so dark’—It might with as much propriety be argued, that *this* included all kinds of darkness, natural, preternatural, moral, and spiritual; as, that *ever* so sincere includes all kinds of sincerity.

To prevent any mistake in future, I am willing to let you know how I understand the word, and how I wish to be understood when I use it. The plain, natural signification of the word appears to be this—*The honest persuasion of the mind, according to the degree of light in the understanding*; and in general is to be understood in distinction from hypocrisy. Thus, a man may be a sincere friend to the Federal Constitution. He may be a good man in a *moral* sense, and yet his sincere attach-



ment to the laws of his country, may be the effect of his political sentiments, rather than his piety. Another man may sincerely believe the xxxix articles of the Church of England, and as sincerely believe that all the dissenters are wrong. I shall not pretend to say that this is godly sincerity, or that it is not ; but I will venture to say he may be a good man, and this may be his sincere opinion.

In farther remarking upon this part of the subject you say, ‘ Your words imply, that a person may, in the exercise of godly sincerity, act contrary to the will of Christ.’ In order to make a satisfactory reply to this, it will be proper to inquire what is meant by the will of Christ. When I use the term, I mean his *WILL revealed in his word* : For I know nothing of his will farther than he has therein made it known. It is a general maxim with Protestants, that the word of God is a perfect rule of faith and practice. Therefore, to talk of things as being agreeable or disagreeable to the will of Christ, in any other sense than as they are approved or disapproved by the *word* of God, is to talk merely upon the footing of conjecture. Hence, Sir, if you understand the will of Christ in this sense, I freely acknowledge it to be my opinion, that a good man may sincerely act contrary to it. You may call this *godly sincerity*, or by any other name that you please.

If good men cannot be sincerely wrong, or in other words, sincerely erroneous, then all their errors and mistakes, must be considered as agreeable to the will of Christ ; or otherwise, as acts of criminal hypocrisy ! But you ask, ‘ Is not godly sincerity the very *soul* and *essence* of conformity to Christ ?’ I answer, it is impossible to conform to the *will* of Christ without sincerity, or uprightness of heart ; but mere sincerity is by no means conformity to Christ’s will, with respect to positive institutions. It can only be considered as a necessary qualification for conformity. Under the Mosaic economy, a lamb for sacrifice must be without blemish ; but the perfection of the lamb did not make it a sacrifice, this only rendered it suitable ; but it was its being actually offered up. So with regard to our obeying any positive

precept, sincerity is absolutely necessary to acceptable obedience. A man may be convinced that it is his duty to relieve a needy brother ; and also sincerely determine at a convenient season to do it ; yet certain circumstances may take place, so as finally to prevent its being accomplished. That God may approve of his *sincere intention*, will not be disputed ; but we can have fellowship in his charity no farther than we *know* it, which is only by his acting it out. It will be granted that Christ judges the moral qualities of our actions by the intentions of the heart ; but he has not given this as a rule to us, any farther than it discovers itself in the action. Christ pronounces the man guilty of adultery, who looks on a woman criminally to lust after her ; but we have no right, either by the laws of God or man, to charge any person with that crime, without the actual commission of it.

I conclude, that a good man may, in one period of life, *sincerely* believe that he is acting according to the will of Christ, and at another, as sincerely believe that what he then did, was never commanded, or enjoined by Christ ; but was the mere effect of education or tradition.

Nothing can bring the matter more familiarly into view, than the subject now in dispute. We will suppose, that in the sincerity of your heart, you have desired to open a door for free communion with some of the Baptists ; and as '*sincerity* is the very essence of conformity to Christ,' we must conclude, in this particular you act agreeably to his will. On the other hand, the Baptists to whom you make the friendly proposal, *as sincerely* believe, that it is not according to the will of Christ, that they should communicate with you in your present situation. This also contains the essence of conformity to Christ.

Thus, Sir, if I understand your argument, this must be the conclusion ; that it is the *will* of Christ, that the Pædobaptists should communicate with the Baptists ; and at the same time, it is his *will*, that the Baptists should not communicate with them ! I shall take it for granted, that the Baptists do in the *sincerity* of their

hearts, refuse to communicate with those whom they look upon as not baptized according to Christ's institution. If this *refusal* be made with *godly sincerity*, (and who will dare to say it is not?) then according to your argument, it must be 'above every thing else pleasing to Christ;' equally so, as communicating with other denominations at the table.

To illustrate your doctrine of *sincerity* you ask, 'Would it be according to the will of Christ, for a person to conform to your mode of baptism, while he really thinks it would be contrary to the will of Christ for him so to do?' To answer this, it will be necessary first to inquire, whether the mode of baptism practised by us, is according to Christ's revealed will? If not, neither our *thinking*, or *not* thinking, can possibly make it so. If it be according to his will, our thinking otherwise cannot alter it, unless his will is entirely dependent on the opinion of his creatures.

Again, you ask, 'Would it be according to the will of Christ, for a person to *neglect* to have his children baptized in *our* mode, while he really thinks it is the will of Christ for him thus to bring them to the ordinance?' *Answer*. If Christ has any where declared it to be his will, that new-born infants should be dedicated to him, by *sprinkling* water upon them in the name of the sacred Trinity, it can by no means be duty to *neglect* it. If not, it may with propriety be asked, *Who hath required this service at your hands?*

But may we not farther inquire, Would it be according to the will of Christ, for a person to *neglect* to have his male children *circumcised*, while he really thinks that it is the will of Christ that they should be?

Again, Would it be according to the will of Christ, for a person to *neglect* to bring his baptized infants to the communion, while he really thinks that it is his will that they should be brought? \* In short, to grant your argument, will not this be the consequence, that every thing which a pious person *sincerely* believes to be according to the will of Christ, is according to it, however absurd or inconsistent it may be?

\* Vide Pierce's Essay on giving the Eucharist to Children.

You have attempted to extricate yourself from this consequence, in your marginal note, (p. 24) wherein you say ; ‘ What has been said does not imply, that a man always *does right* when he thinks he does right ; nor that a man’s conduct is always acceptable to God, when he acts agreeably to his own sentiments.’ ‘ A man may act according to his own sentiments from *selfish desires*, as well as from *holy desires*.’ True, Sir ; and how are we to know which of these govern his conduct ? You have now suggested the difficulty ; but have not proposed a remedy. If men’s actions did always represent the sentiments of their hearts, we should not be exposed to the liability of a mistake ; but as they do not, we may suppose that they may deceive themselves, and others, with respect to their motives of *sincerity*, as well as any thing else.

As you have put your *theory* of *sincerity* upon trial, in some of the foregoing instances, we are willing to compare the matter a little farther. We will grant, that the Pædobaptists, in the *sincerity* of their hearts, believe it to be the will of Christ, that they should give up their children to him in baptism ; and that sprinkling sufficiently answers the mode. On the other hand we will allow, that the Baptists, influenced by the *same kind* of *sincerity*, really believe that it is the will of Christ, that they should be immersed upon a profession of faith (whether they have been sprinkled in infancy or not) and that there is no command to baptize their children ; but to *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. Now, sincerity being the very ‘ essence of conformity to Christ, and under the exercise of godly sincerity they cannot act contrary to his will,’ they are both in complete conformity to it ; unless you will undertake to prove one of them insincere. Hence it follows, that it is the will of Christ, that one part of his church should imitate HIS baptism IN Jordan, by being immersed ; and that another part should believe, that *the baptism of Jesus Christ is not to be imitated by Christians*. That one branch of his church should give up their children to him *in baptism*, and thereby initiate them into the school of the sacred mysteries, without

their knowledge or consent, at a period of life when they are incapable of acting for themselves ; and that another part of his church should, from *principle*, neglect the baptism of their infants ; whilst they consider Christianity as addressing itself to the consciences of all ; and that none can become the disciples of Christ, without *their personal consent*. How complex ! how variable, does this doctrine represent the will of Christ !

But you inform us that you have ‘ one more serious question to ask ;’ (it shall now be attended to.) ‘ Is the will of Christ such, that, while a person is a Pædobaptist in sentiment, he must be under a *natural* and *unavoidable* necessity of disobedience ?’ This question appears to me, rather more *curious* than *serious*. To suppose a person to be under a *natural* and *unavoidable* necessity of disobedience, is to suppose he acts without choice, or that he has not natural ability to do otherwise. I confess I cannot see any *natural* necessity, which compels one person to be a Pædobaptist, rather than another ; or of continuing in those sentiments, rather than to embrace others. Our sentiments ever are, and ever ought to be, the effect of *choice* ; and not of *natural necessity*. If we choose sentiments contrary to the will of Christ, so long as we retain them, we *necessarily* disobey him ; but this is by no means ‘ *natural* and *unavoidable* necessity,’ but entirely of a different kind. I humbly conceive, there can be no *natural* necessity, of either saints or sinners disobeying Christ : for there is a degree of criminality in disobedience, which is not to be found in ‘ *natural unavoidable necessity*.’

To illustrate the doctrine of *sincerity* now under consideration, you introduce the following simile. ‘ A physician may, in certain circumstances, with benevolent intention, through mistake, administer a potion to his patient, which may be productive of immediate death. In this case he is not criminal. Here is no *evil*, but ‘ *natural* evil, to be imputed to his conduct.’ Sir, I have no desire to run the indictment any higher than you do. But, should the patient be so happy as to discover the physician’s mistake, would he be under



any obligation to take the deadly potion, because it was not delivered with criminal intention? Yea, would he not be in the highest sense criminal to do it? To apply this figure. Admitting, that with benevolent intention, you have proposed free communion with us, yet if we really believe it to be inconsistent with some part of Christ's revealed will, we cannot with the *same* purity of intention comply.

But it is time to attend to the application you make from the above observations. You say, 'Granting that immersion be the *appointed mode* of baptism, and believers the *only* proper subjects, yet if a Pædobaptist really think otherwise, and with an *obedient heart* offer up his children in our mode, the person in so doing, is as well accepted in the sight of God, as though his outward conduct had been according to the *appointed mode* of baptism.' Granting this, and I beg to know what foundation Pædobaptism stands upon! If it be not supported by *divine appointment*, it can have no other origin than human tradition; and consequently must fall to the ground; unless you can make it appear, that your *sincere opinion* is of equal authority with divine appointments. 'If a Pædobaptist really think otherwise?' What then? Why this supercedes the whole force of the divine command, and authorizes his own opinion as the *rule* of his conduct! And lest he should scruple the validity of it, he is assured, that in 'so doing *he* is as well accepted in the sight of God, as though his outward conduct had been according to the appointed mode.' According to this argument, divine appointments are of little consequence to Pædobaptists, if they have a right whenever they think proper to set them aside, and substitute others in their room. Perhaps the following words of our Saviour may not be thought wholly inapplicable to this sentiment. *Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own traditions.\**

Is it reasonable to suppose, that God would make appointments for his people which he did not think proper for them to observe? Or has he left discretion-

\* Mark vii. 9.

any orders with any man, or any body of men, to set aside, alter, or amend any of his positive institutions? But I recollect you have said, (p. 6.) that ‘it is not necessary that men should *think* in all respects as God *thinks* ;’ and perhaps this is one instance where you would apply it. For, if God has thought fit to appoint the mode, and describe the subjects of baptism ; and a Pædobaptist may offer *subjects* essentially different from those described in the institution, and that in a mode quite unlike the divine appointment, and yet be ‘*as well accepted*,’ as though he had observed the most exact conformity to God’s law ; surely then, we may very *sincerely* make void the commandments of God, and establish our *own* pious traditions !

To sanction the foregoing argument you say, ‘This is agreeable to common sense and revelation.’

How far common sense may be in favour of your argument I shall not here pretend to say ; but if *divine revelation* fairly establish it, it must be conceded to. But before we decide upon this point it may be proper to hear revelation speak for itself. Decked with sovereign majesty it thus addresses us ; “*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it : thou shalt not ADD thereto, nor DIMINISH from it.*”<sup>\*</sup> What, not if we ‘*really think otherwise* ?’ By no means. But constantly “*Teaching them to OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU.*”<sup>†</sup> Granting this ; but, if we sincerely think, and act otherwise, shall we not be ‘*as well accepted* ?’ “*To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*”<sup>‡</sup> “*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*”<sup>§</sup> For “*In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*”<sup>||</sup>

This is the voice of revelation with respect to positive institutions ; and notwithstanding you have challenged the judgment of *common sense* in favour of your sentiments, we are willing to recommit the matter, and abide the impartial decision. If it be not a dictate of common sense, that God’s commands should be implicitly obeyed, and his positive institutions strictly observ-

<sup>\*</sup> Deut. xii. 32.      <sup>†</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.      <sup>‡</sup> 1 Sam. xv. 22.

<sup>§</sup> John xiv. 15.      <sup>||</sup> Matt. xv. 9.

ed, without the least known deviation ; and that the *sincere observance* of his appointments should be more acceptable to him than the *sincere neglect* of them ; then, of course your argument will be established, and we must conclude, that like the *Athenians*, in *these things* we have been too *superstitious*.

You acknowledge, (p. 27) that ‘integrity of heart does not render the judgment infallible, with respect to ascertaining the will of God.’ This indeed appears to me to be true ; but why then do you blame me for supposing a person with godly sincerity may act contrary to the will of Christ ? I think it undeniably follows, that if he may with *integrity of heart* mistake his will, or not *ascertain* it, then he may with the same uprightness act contrary to it. But did you not tell us above, that ‘sincerity is the very *soul* and *essence* of conformity to Christ ?’ What, in the height of conformity to the *will* of Christ ! and yet not able to ascertain what it is ? This, at best, is but accidental conformity !

The sentiment expressed in my other Piece, of acting contrary to the will of Christ, “ although we be *ever so sincere*,” you ‘conjecture to be false in its nature, and pernicious in its consequences.’ It is true, conjecture is not the most forcible argument ; but yet it may be right. I am not satisfied, however, that you have proved the sentiment to be *false* ; or that it is in your power to do it, after granting the first part of it. As to the pernicious consequences which you have discovered in it, I may have overlooked them ; probably, because they are not so high coloured as the charge. But what pernicious consequences can we imagine from our conformity to the apostles’ doctrine, and steadfast continuance in it ? Or from following the plain directions in God’s word, rather than our own fancied notion of *sincere obedience*, without external conformity ? I think you will not pretend to say, that I have insisted upon a conformity to the apostles’ doctrine, which did not include *sincerity*. You cannot say it without injuring me, and contradicting yourself.\*

\* If, as you say, (p. 12) I insist upon a person’s being a real believer in order to his being a proper subject of baptism, then he must certainly be *sincere*.

It appears to me, that the particular sentiment now in dispute will come to this point. I am contending for *sincere conformity* to the positive institutions of Christ, in the *exact order* in which he has placed them. You are pleading for the acceptableness of *sincere deviations* from Christ's appointments.

To proceed—You observe, that 'it is not the *external conduct* which is pleasing or displeasing to Christ; but it is *sincerity* or *insincerity*.' I am far from thinking that the strictest external conformity without sincerity would be pleasing to him. Yet, I think it reasonable to suppose, that a *sincere external* obedience to the positive commands of Christ, must be more pleasing to him than a *sincere* omission of them. For, saith he, *Who-so-ever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall DO and TEACH them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.\** Should you say this has special reference to the *moral law*, it will be granted; but it may not be wholly inapplicable to the case before us. Therefore, with a little variation, I may use the language of an inspired writer; "Show me thy *sincerity* without thy *external obedience* to the appointments of Christ; and I will show thee my *sincerity* by my *external obedience* to them."

Whether *sincerely* departing from God's positive commands, be as pleasing to him as *sincere* external conformity, will more fully appear in what follows.

When God had sent Samuel to anoint Saul king over the chosen tribes, he thought proper to try his loyalty, by sending him to destroy the Amalekites, for their cruelty to his people when they came up out of Egypt. The command was, *Utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.* Saul went with his chosen band, and spread death and carnage through Amalek's devoted country! He undoubtedly returned from the victorious field, in full confidence of meeting the prophet's approbation. But while coming, God

made known to Samuel, that Saul had *turned back from following him*. When Samuel came forth in the morning, Saul met him, and thus addressed him :—"Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment." Although he had not gone to the extent of the commandment, yet he might sincerely think, as he had made ample provision for one of the richest sacrifices that ever smoked upon the Jewish altar, that in thus doing, he should be '*as well accepted,*' as though he had wholly followed the divine command. We may suppose his soul almost in an ecstasy, fully expecting the prophet's benediction ; when, to his surprise, the grieved Seer thus interrogates—*What meaneth this bleating of the sheep in mine ears ! and the lowing of the oxen which I hear ? What meaneth this ? Why, the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to do sacrifice to the Lord thy God.* A very pious design indeed ! Who would challenge their sincerity ? I do not recollect that the prophet charged Saul with hypocrisy, or insincerity ; but with the want of external obedience. I shall not pretend to say that Saul had any godly sincerity, or that he had not ; but it is evident until this time, that his character was unimpeached, and he was honoured as the Lord's anointed.

Another instance still more to our purpose, presents us in the sacred page. When the wicked sons of Eli were slain by the Philistines, they took the ark of the God of Israel, and carried it into the temple of their idol. The uncircumcised had scarcely began to rejoice, when they found themselves involved in strange and unlooked for calamities. Their idol Dagon fell before the ark, while terror, death and destruction were spreading every where. The ark of God soon became more terrible to them than an army with banners. A general council was called—they resolved to send it back into the land of Israel ; but not being acquainted with the sacred oracles, they were at a loss as to the mode of conveyance. It was finally determined to send it in a new undirected cart, drawn by two milch-kine. When it was come into the land of Israel, after a short



tarry at Bethshemesh, it was carried to Kirjath-jearim, into the house of Abinadab, where it was kept for twenty years, until David was established upon the throne. After this, he assembled thirty thousand chosen men, with a view to bring the ark of the God of Israel up into the city of David.

This ark by divine appointment was to be borne by the priests, by the slaves which went through the rings of it. But as the instituted mode might appear rather inconvenient at this time, they might think the one adopted by the Philistines would do as well. And as they might call to mind, that "God delighted more in mercy than in sacrifice;" both David and his people very *sincerely* concluded, that it would do to carry it in a decent *new cart*. But the way being rough, and the oxen unaccustomed to this hallowed business, so agitated the sacred ark, that Uzzah put forth his hand and took hold of it. *And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his ERROR, and there he died by the ark.*

What there was, either in the conduct or disposition of Uzzah, which was so offensive to the Divine Being, as to mark him out as a monument of sacred displeasure, is perhaps unknown to mortals. It is evident that David did not discover any criminality in the conduct of Uzzah; for if he had, he would not have been displeased because the Lord made a breach upon him. There was at least the appearance of *sincere* regard, in his attempting to steady the agitated ark. But God seeth not as man seeth; and has ever been jealous for his own honour as lawgiver, which glory he will not give to another.

This alarming providence checked their pious joy, and put a sudden period to all their tuneful numbers. An awful fear of the great Jehovah was now impressed upon their minds. Silent, and solemn, they retire and leave the ark without the city!

Will any person say that David did not go in the *sincerity* of his heart? Let those who deny it, make out the proof.

It may perhaps be difficult for us to discover any real difference in the *design*, or *sincerity*, of David and his people at this time, or three months after, when they brought up the ark into the city of David with shouting. But, we shall readily discover a difference in their visible conduct. In the former, they followed their own imaginations. In the latter they went according to divine appointment. Their *departing* from the instituted way, (however sincere) drew on them God's displeasure. Their *obedience* to it obtained his approbation. If I mistake not, Sir, this instance is a fair trial of your argument, and it appears to me that it fails.

I have one more observation from scripture to make upon this head. If I rightly understand the *revealed will* of God, we are strictly forbidden to worship any creature, however exalted. *For it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.\**

Yet I find that the apostle John twice fell down to worship an angel ! I hardly think you will scruple the sincerity of the beloved disciple upon this occasion. The question now is, whether it were agreeable to the will of Christ for John to worship the angel ? It is evident he thought it to be his duty ; and his conduct has every appearance of *sincerity*. Allowing John to be *sincere*, and his conduct in this particular instance agreeable to the will of Christ, then the above-mentioned prohibition must be understood conditionally. “ It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve ; ” *unless thou shalt sincerely think it duty to worship a creature*. If it were not agreeable to the will of Christ that John should worship the angel, then it necessarily follows, that a good person may, in the exercise of *sincerity*, act contrary to his will.

If, to evade the force of this argument, you should say, ‘ Although John sincerely thought it to be his duty to worship the angel, yet he was undoubtedly mistaken,’ this is to give up the argument : for we have always been willing to allow that Christians may be *sincere*, and yet be mistaken as to the will of Christ.

\* Matt. iv. 10.

That this was the case, with either John, or the angel, is abundantly evident. And in order to save your argument from falling, it appears necessary to be proved, either that it was agreeable to the will of Christ for John to worship the angel; or, that he was insincere in attempting it. Until one or the other is made out, we shall conclude he *sincerely* attempted to do that, which was expressly forbidden in the revealed will of God. Many more instances might be produced, but the preceding are thought sufficient, to show the absurdity of considering sincerity of heart as actual conformity to the will of Christ, with respect to his positive institutions.

In pursuing your argument you conclude, those persons differ from Christ, who ‘suppose, that a good tree may bring forth *corrupt fruit*.’ They certainly do, if the words are taken in a proper sense. But if by the *good tree* we understand a Christian, including all his exercises both of flesh and spirit, it is not true, that *he cannot bring forth corrupt fruit*. To deny this, would be to assert that he is in a state of sinless perfection: for all imperfect and depraved creatures can and do sin.

Now if good men have some *holy*, and some *selfish* desires; and are sometimes governed by *pure*, and sometimes by *corrupt* motives; how are we to know which of these govern their conduct, when they plead their sincerity in departing from God’s appointments?

I conclude, Protestants in general look upon Calvin as a good man; but as a *tree* he bore some fruit, which the taste of a modern Christian would not call good: particularly his unchristian resentment, and inhuman treatment of Servetus.\* It is evident that Calvin, in

\* This learned and ingenious Spaniard was born at Villeneuve, in Aragon, 1509. He studied the civil law at Toulous, where he began to read the scriptures, and to be fond of trinitarian notions. He soon became resolved to retire into Germany and set up for a reformer. He there printed two tracts, *De Trinitatis erroribus*, and *Dialogorum de Trinitate, libri duo*; this spread his name throughout all Europe. After this, Servetus returned to Paris, and was admitted a doctor of physic in the university there. Here a correspondence betwixt Calvin and him commenced, which was kept up for sixteen years: notwithstanding which, he continued in his former opinion, and resolved to publish a third work in favour of it; this came out at Vienna, in 1533,

this piece of conduct, thought he was doing God service. To suppose the contrary, and that he was not *sincere*, would be to suppose him a much greater *monster* than he represented Servetus. Allowing this to be an act of *sincerity*, and the question is fair before us, Was it agreeable to the will of Christ, for Calvin thus to persecute Servetus? If you should answer in the negative, you give up your theory; if you should answer in the affirmative, then it will necessarily follow, that if it were the will of Christ two hundred and forty years ago, that antitrinitarians and anabaptists should be burnt, merely for their sentiments, it undoubtedly is agreeable to his will now, as he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

In the mild reign of Edward VI. king of England, but two persons suffered for their religious sentiments. And although these persons were both put to death, I do not find that they were charged with any other crime, than differing in opinion from the ruling party.

with this title, *Christianismo Restitutio*, &c. without his name; but Calvin took care to inform the Roman Catholics in France who was the author. On this Servetus was imprisoned and would certainly have been burnt then, if he had not made his escape. He proposed to retire to Naples, but was imprudent enough to go through Geneva, where he was seized on Calvin's information, and prosecuted for heresy. All his public writings and private letters to Calvin, were ransacked for every thing that could be strained to a bad sense; in consequence of which the unfortunate Servetus was burnt alive, Oct. 27th, 1553, "to the eternal shame of his inconsistent brutal reformed persecutors." Servetus was a man of great acuteness, of prodigious learning, and admirably skilled in his own profession.—See Calvin's Life, Glasgow edition, p. 17, 19—and Northouck's Biographical Dictionary.

Calvin's historian informs us, that the death of Servetus raised such a flame, as set Poland, Transylvania and Hungary all on fire; which he supposed Servetus to have foretold by the spirit of the devil. This controversy led many rationally to inquire, whether hereticks ought to be put to death, or left to the judgment of God?

That Servetus was an antitrinitarian will not be denied. This probably was the greatest cause of Calvin's opposition to him, but not the whole: for he considered him as a "monster composed of many ancient and prodigious heresies." He calls him an anabaptist, and has attempted to answer twenty arguments brought by Servetus against infant baptism.—*Institut. Christ. Relig.* p. 649.

The former of these was Joan Bocher, commonly called Joan of Kent.\* Archbishop Cranmer was employed to persuade the young king to sign the warrant against her. He used various reasonings, which served rather to silence, than satisfy the king. But at length he did it with tears in his eyes, telling Cranmer, that if he did wrong, since it was in submission to his authority, he should answer for it to God. This made such an impression upon the mind of the bishop, that he used farther means for her conviction; but as she obstinately continued in her sentiments, she was finally burnt alive.

That Cranmer was *sincere* in this piece of conduct, we have the testimony of bishop Barnet, who says, "One thing was certain, that what he did in this matter flowed from no cruelty of temper in him, no man being farther from that black disposition of mind; but it was truly the effect of those *principles*, by which he governed himself."†

I confess here is a difficulty in my mind (and probably may be in many others) to conceive, how this conduct could be agreeable to the all-merciful Redeemer, who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. It is not to be believed from any thing which Christ has said; but merely because it was the *sincere opinion* of an archbishop! I have no difficulty in believing the sincerity of Cranmer, but I have not yet attained to the *faith of assurance*, that his conduct was agreeable to the revealed will of Christ.

It may also be observed, that Mr. John Rogers, that famous martyr, cordially consented to the burning of Joan of Kent. "For (saith Mr. Fox) when the *Protestant bishops* had resolved to put her to death, a friend of Mr. John Rogers, the divinity-reader in St. Paul's church, came to him, earnestly desiring him to use his interest with the archbishop, that the poor woman's

\* The other was George Van Pare, a Dutchman; he was burnt in Smithfield, April 25, 1551. He suffered with great constancy of mind, and kissed the stake and faggots that were to burn him. He is said to have been a man of uncommon strictness of life and devotion. These persons were both Baptists. Vide Hist. Reform. Vol. ii lib. i. p. 112.

† Ibid.



life might be spared, and other means used to prevent the spreading of her opinions.—Rogers on the other hand pleaded, she ought to be put to death. Well, then, says his *friend*,\* if you are resolved to put an end to her life, together with her opinion, choose some other kind of death, more agreeable to the gentleness and mercy prescribed in the gospel; there being no need that such tormenting deaths should be taken up in imitation of the papists. Rogers answered, that *burning alive* was no cruel death, but easy enough. His *friend* then hearing these words, which expressed so little regard to poor creatures' sufferings, answered him with great vehemence—*Well, perhaps it may so happen, that you yourself shall have your hands full of this mild burning.* And so it came to pass; and Rogers was the first man who was burnt in Queen Mary's time."

"This Rogers (says Pierce) was a *nonconformist*, and a very excellent man, and died nobly in the cause of Christ; but this *barbarity* of his deserves to be exposed; and the rather, because God in his providence seems to have shewn his great displeasure against it."† If this indeed were the case, it could not be agreeable to the will of Christ.

It is quite remarkable, that Cranmer, Ridley, and Rogers, who had a principal hand in burning these two persons in the reign of Edward, were all burnt in the succeeding reign of Mary.

I do not mention these things with a view of glorying in the sufferings of my own denomination, nor for the sake of reproaching others; but to show what enormous cruelties good men may practise, under the *specious* show of *godly sincerity* and a zeal for the truth.

\* Supposed to be Fox himself.

† Pierce's Answer to Nichols, p. 33, in Crosby.

## SECTION VII.

*Whether there be any Morality in 'Externals' or 'Sentiments ;' and whether sincerity of heart secures the judgment from error ; briefly considered.*

SIR, you have anticipated an objection against your theory ; i. e. ' That a good intention will sanctify a wicked action.' We shall only notice two things in your answer. First you say, ' That *mere externals* are neither holy nor sinful, is evident from this consideration, that the *same modes* of external conduct are convertible to both *good and bad purposes*.\* But, Sir, is there no morality in good and bad purposes ? You seem to convert them neither to one or the other, but to a state of indifferency. I suppose the same external modes of conduct may be the ' expressions both of holy and sinful affections.' But this by no means proves, that there is no morality in our external conduct. If we are rational agents (and we certainly are) whatever mode of external conduct we pursue, must be our choice, rather than any other ; and how this can be without morality, I am totally at a loss.

I conclude, Sir, that you will allow that eating bread and drinking wine, are external acts ; but if there be no morality in them, it is hardly worth while to waste our time in a dispute about such trifling things. I do not conclude, however, that the morality of the act is merely in masticating bread, or in swallowing wine, which a brute may do as well as an intelligent agent ; but the circumstances which lead us to choose and adopt this particular mode of conduct, undoubtedly tinge the *act* with morality.

Your other observation which I shall take notice of, is the following, that ' There is nothing of a moral nature in *mere sentiments* or *mere externals*.' If by ' *mere sentiments*,' you mean no more, than those fugitive thoughts which flutter upon the surface of the

brain, as *butterflies* do in the sun-beams, we shall not contend. But, if by *sentiment*, we understand that result of the mind which leads us on to *external* acts, we shall undoubtedly find that it is connected with the heart, as well as the head. *The fool hath said*, not in his head, but *in his heart*, *there is no God*. This is his sentiment, and a very innocent one it is, if destitute of morality.

You will permit me to add a remark from a very sentimental writer. Saith he, "Error in judgment and sentiment, especially in things of a moral nature, is always wrong; and does not consist or originate merely in any defect of the moral faculties of the mind; but is of a moral nature, in which the taste, affection, or inclination of the heart is concerned; and therefore is always, in every degree of it, morally wrong, and more or less criminal. Were the moral faculties of the mind, were the heart, perfectly right, man would not be capable of error, or of judging wrong, or making any mistake, especially in things of religion. The natural faculties of the mind, considered as separate from the inclination or will, do not lead, and have no tendency in themselves, to judge wrong, or contrary to the truth of things. To do so, is to judge without evidence, and contrary to it, which the mind never would or could do, were not the inclination or heart concerned in it, so as to have influence, which must be a wrong inclination, and contrary to truth and to evidence; and therefore is morally wrong or criminal."

"Therefore, all the mistakes and wrong opinions which men entertain respecting the *doctrines*, *institutions* and *duties* revealed in the bible, are criminal, and of a bad tendency."\* If this reasoning be true, it cannot be said that there is nothing of a *moral nature* in our *sentiments*.

I conclude that the Bible exhibits a fair system of truth, supported by rational evidence; and were it not for the blindness of the human *heart*, and the prejudices occasioned by *sinful affections*, men would yield their cheerful assent to truth, in exact proportion to the evi-

dence laid before them ; and would not *choose darkness rather than light*. It is believed that good men, (however they may differ in opinion here) in the coming state will see eye to eye : perhaps not owing so much to the superior light of truth, as to their being delivered from those sinful affections which oppose the truth. This observation will appear evident from this consideration, that those who have the greatest advantages to know the truth, often appear to be most opposed to it. The Jews, who had the oracles of God, and consequently the best information respecting the Messiah, when he was preached to them, opposed and blasphemed, while the Gentiles believed.

Upon supposition, that ‘there is nothing of a *moral nature* in mere sentiments,’ why is *unbelief* a crime ? or why is a man to blame for being an *infidel* ? this is a mere sentiment. In short, why do we blame the Jews for accusing and delivering Christ to be crucified ? It is evident they did not believe him to be the Son of God. The apostle Peter, after charging them with killing the Prince of Life, said to them ; *Now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it*, as did also your rulers.\* Saint Paul supposed that they did not know him to be the Messiah : for, said he, *None of the princes of this world knew it* : for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.† No, they would have been shocked at the horrid thought ! But their *sentiments* were that he was a deceiver, and a blasphemer ; and they had a *law* given them by Moses against such, and by this law they said he ought to die. And their *external conduct* was to put him to death. Now where was their criminality ? You will probably say it originated in their hearts, ‘where all real criminality is to be found.’ It will be granted. And did not their sentiments originate there likewise ? Out of the HEART proceed evil thoughts, murders, &c. and not out of the head as unconnected with it.

In order to apply the foregoing observations to the subject before us, we are willing to acknowledge, that we do not think a man to blame, for sincerely acting

\* Acts iii. 17.

† 1 Cor. ii. 8.

according to his conscience, although it be ever so erroneous. But he may be exceedingly to blame, for having an erroneous conscience. If we do not improve the best means of information which we are favoured with, we are certainly to blame for the neglect.

It is a maxim in civil law, 'That a man is obliged to know it at his peril.' This holds good with regard to the divine law. The man who transgressed the law of Moses through ignorance, however sincere, was nevertheless guilty; and when it came to his knowledge he was obliged to offer a sacrifice.\* And he who killed his neighbour at unawares, without in the least designing his death, was nevertheless doomed to suffer a certain punishment; for, to be confined to a particular city, without permission upon any occasion to go out until the death of the high-priest, cannot be accounted otherwise.†

Upon the whole, what reason can be given for our construing the divine law differently? Or why should one man see a revealed truth, and another under equal advantages should not; unless the latter be under the influence of moral blindness? If the positive institutions of the gospel are sufficiently plain (as they undoubtedly are) why should we read and understand the same bible so very differently? I cannot think we are both right. If Christ has commanded his people to dedicate their infant-seed to him in baptism, then we must conclude that all the Baptist churches are in an error in this particular. On the other hand, if the gospel teacheth us, that with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness, and with the *mouth confession* is made unto salvation; and that this confession is to be made by every candidate for baptism; then we must suppose our Pædobaptist brethren are in an error, in not insisting upon the same visible qualifications which the apostles did. In short, can it be supposed that the same divine law, which enjoins either the *one* or the *other*, can approve of the neglect? If not, it must necessarily follow, that if you are right, we are wrong; and so vice versa.

\* Lev. iv. 13, 21, 27.

† Numb. xxxv. 25.



But it is often said by our opponents, 'We are willing to acknowledge your baptism to be valid, and why cannot you be as *liberal* with respect to ours?' We are sorry to bear the charge of illiberality; but had much rather do it than violate our consciences. When persons are so liberal, as to be willing to divide and mangle an institution of Christ, in order to accommodate a painful dispute; while it seems to show a condescending temper in them, it at the same time excites a suspicion of the *justice* of their *cause*. This kind of liberality of sentiment naturally leads us to recollect an instance recorded in ancient history, concerning two women who came to a certain king, to decide a controversy between them respecting a *living* child. Each contended that she was the *true mother*, and that the child was her's. For a time, their claims appeared equally founded, until at length the wise king called for a sword, and proposed to divide the living child, and give half to the one and half to the other! The woman whose the child was, could by no means consent; but would either have it alive undivided, or else give it up so to the other: *but the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.* To have divided the child, would have destroyed its existence: So to divide an institution of Christ, is to make it mean any thing, and every thing, and consequently nothing. For when a divine law is supposed to be conditional, and is to be left to the judgment or fancies of men to determine, whether one mode of obedience be not as acceptable as another, it of course loses its authority, and ceases to be a law.

From the above argument it will not be concluded, that one man has a right to dictate, or prescribe a mode of obedience for another: for to our *own Master we stand or fall*. Nevertheless, the divine law is not conditional, but absolute; and its requirements must be fixed and determinate, although we may not understand them. *ONE LAW shall be to him that is home born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.*

To conclude this Section, dear Sir, I wish you seriously to consider your arguments upon sincerity, whether you have not carried the matter too far; and

whether they are not calculated in some instances, to disserve the cause of Christ, and strengthen the hands of error. For admitting that either you or we are in an error with respect to one of the institutions of Christ, yet as your sentiments assure us, that if we sincerely think we are right, 'We are as well accepted in the sight of God, as if our external conduct had been according to his appointments,' shall we not be apt to release ourselves from a painful inquiry into the evidences for, and against our particular sentiments; and conclude to slide smoothly on, in the good old way which our fathers went; and, perhaps, have no higher reason to believe it to be right, than because *they* believed it to be so?

It is often said, 'When we get to heaven, we shall not be asked what particular principles we were of' This objection implies too great an indifferency to the requirements of *truth*; and leads us to suppose that many determine to get to heaven as cheap as they can. And whenever persons would wish a release from the toil of inquiry, and expense of retraction, they may improve your arguments as a cordial auxiliary.

But were we even to grant *sincerity* to be a term of communion, yet should we not be obliged to fix upon some external acts of obedience, as evidential of sincerity? Or are we to judge a man to be sincere by the looks of his face? Or by the tincture of his thoughts? Or are we to believe it because he professes to be sincere? Perhaps the man was never yet found propagating any sentiment of religion whatever, who would own himself insincere.

If *sincerity* be the only thing sought for, and agreement in sentiment unnecessary to Christian fellowship, then we may open the door wide, and receive all who appear to be sincere, however erroneous, and by whatever names distinguished, wherever they appear sincere.

Perhaps there is no one act in the circle of Christian duty, which expresses more fellowship, than communicating at the Lord's table. And if we can occasionally communicate together, why can we not statedly? We shall also be led farther to inquire, upon what principle

is separation to be justified ? Why did the Protestants come out from the church of Rome ? There were undoubtedly many sincere Christians in that church, notwithstanding the body of clergy might be thought to be corrupt. Why did the dissenters leave the church of England, and the independents the presbyterians, and these dissent one from another ? It would be uncharitable to suppose, that there were not many sincere Christians in these churches. Objections similar to those now mentioned have in fact taken place.

When *presbyterianism* was about to be established by the British government, the assembly of divines at Westminster appointed a committee to hear and answer the petition of those who should not conform to the government.

To these the independents presented their request, Dec. 4th, 1645, which was only this : ‘ That they may not be forced to communicate as members in those parishes where they dwell ; but may have liberty to have congregations of such persons who give good testimony of their godliness, and yet out of a tenderness of conscience cannot communicate in their parishes, but do voluntarily offer themselves to join in such congregations.’

To this the assembly gave a flat denial, Dec. 15th. ‘ The *independents*, unwilling to lose the privileges of the establishment, made the following concession. “ That they would maintain occasional communion in their churches.” But still their presbyterian brethren would not allow them separate congregations. They rather improved this compliance, to strengthen their arguments against granting such liberty. “ If (say they) they may occasionally exercise these acts of communion with us once, a second, or a third time, without sin ; we know no reason why it may not be ordinarily without sin, and then separation and church-gathering would have been needless. To separate from those churches ordinarily and visibly, with whom occasionally you may join without sin, seemeth to be a most unjust separation.”\*

\* Schism tried and condemned, p 25, 27, 28. in Crosby.

Every candid reader will judge, whether the questions now suggested, are not involved in the idea of occasional communion, upon the term of sincerity. Another interesting question appears to be connected, viz. Whether it be consistent to communicate with any person, or body of Christians, with whom we could not unite in full fellowship, as members of the same church? If there be any act more solemn, more expressive of unity and agreement, let it be pointed out! For persons to separate from each other, merely on account of disagreement in sentiment, and yet hold occasional communion (which expresses their agreement) is the height of absurdity.

Upon the whole, if 'baptism was prior to coming to the Lord's table in the apostolic practice' (which you have acknowledged, p. 13)—if it was then an immersion upon a profession of faith, which I trust has been made out in the preceding pages; and no scripture evidence appearing to the contrary; then you will not blame us for *continuing in the apostolic doctrine*, and for endeavouring carefully to imitate their *practice*. Hence it is probable our *objections* may continue, until proof shall be made out from the word of God, that the apostolic church did admit persons to her communion merely upon the footing of *sincerity*, without any regard to the external mode of their obedience to Christ's other appointments.

## SECTION VIII.

*Whether the Divine Conduct towards us be the Rule of Duty towards our Christian Brethren, rather than God's revealed Will; briefly considered.*

IT will be readily granted, that some parts of the divine conduct are to be imitated by all who love God. Yet our obligation to *be followers of God as dear children*, does not originate so much from what he *does*, as from

what he *commands*. Therefore, we are not to imitate the divine conduct, in any thing which would lead us contrary to his revealed will.

There are some parts of the divine conduct, which it would be highly improper for us to attempt to imitate; such as the following: *He* suspended the established laws of nature, “and held the falling day,” until Israel had gained the victory over his enemies. *He* arrested Jordan in its course, and compelled its waters to retire, and made a passage for his chosen tribes. *He* opened the mouth of Balaam’s ass, and caused the stupid brute to reprove the more brutish prophet. *He* commanded Abraham, as a test of his love and obedience, to offer up his beloved son for a sacrifice; and it is certain he highly approved of Abraham’s conduct, and blessed his unreserved obedience. I presume no one will infer from this, that we are to express our love to God by sacrificing our children to him. God has at several times destroyed his enemies by fire from heaven; but when the two disciples were desirous of punishing the ungrateful Samaritans in the same way, Jesus reproved their blind zeal, and told them plainly, they knew not what spirit they were of.\*

Instances might be multiplied from scripture, to show, that the divine conduct is not in all cases the rule of our duty; but you have supposed one, which you conclude is worthy of our imitation—It shall now be the subject of our inquiry.

You take it for granted, that God communes with the Pædobaptists at his holy table; and hence ask, ‘Why cannot you commune with those at the table, with whom God communes?’ As this question was anticipated in my other Piece, you have from thence introduced the following reply, i. e. ‘It is not what God can or does do, but his revealed will, which is the rule of our duty.’ On this you observe, ‘I hope, Sir, I shall never object to your making the revealed will of God the rule of your duty. But this, Sir, is a part of his revealed will, *Be ye followers of God, as dear children.* And if God be *willing* to commune with Pædo-

\* Gen. xix. 24. 2 Kings i. 10. Luke ix. 54.



baptists, why should you be *unwilling* to imitate his example in this respect ?

You will permit me, Sir, to inquire, whether you sincerely think, that the apostles had particular reference to communion at the Lord's table, when he exhorted the Ephesians to be *followers of God* ? If he had not, it affords no proof for your argument. If this were his object, he must be understood as addressing them in the following manner : Brethren, God communes with you, and why cannot you commune with one another ? *Be ye followers of God, as dear children.* But was the church of Ephesus at this early period so divided, that they did not hold visible communion together ? Were there then in the church Pædobaptists, and Anti-pædobaptists, who had set up separate communions ? When this is fairly proved, we ought to believe it. You go on to say—'Supposing that the Pædobaptists are really in an error ; if Christ does not view the error as so essential, but that HE will commune with them, why should you ? Is the servant greater than his lord ?' By no means : *for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth.* And although he giveth rules to his servants to regulate their conduct by ; yet he is not particularly bound by them himself. But you seem to suppose, that Christ communes with you in a certain sense, in which we are unwilling to. But how are we to understand you ? Surely not that Christ comes personally among you, or that he actually communes with you in the bread and wine ? If not, we must suppose it is spiritually ; i. e. he may own and bless you, notwithstanding there may be some imperfections in your obedience. But are we unwilling to commune with you spiritually ? Have not all good men, as far as they have the knowledge of each other, communion in this sense ? And do they not heartily approve of all sincere Christians, as far as they view them walking in the truth ? We may not from hence infer, that Christ approves of the errors of any, or that the most profuse charity requires it of us.

To suppose that the Pædobaptists are in an error, and that this is of such a nature that Christ could not

commune with or bless them, would it not be to suppose it fatal, and inconsistent with their eternal salvation? And should it be granted, 'that God communes at his table with the pure in heart of both denominations,' yet never in such a sense as to approve of the errors of either.

That God has communed with, or blessed good men, notwithstanding they were guilty of some errors, will appear from what follows :—It is said of Solomon, that he loved the Lord, and walked in the statutes of David his father; only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. The same is said of Jehoshaphat, and Jotham, that they did that which was right in the sight of the Lord: but the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.\* We can here only conceive, that God approved of what was right according to his commandments; while he wholly condemned their sacrifices in high places and groves.

When the ordinance of the passover had not for a long time been observed as it was written, king Hezekiah issued his proclamation, summoning all Israel to attend the solemn feast. But when the people came together, many of them had not those external qualifications which the ordinance required; and consequently did eat the passover otherwise than it was written: but Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.† Hence it is evident, that they were in some degree guilty, for omitting those external pre-requisites which the ordinance required; notwithstanding they prepared their hearts to seek the Lord. If this were not the case, they could not have needed a pardon, for this ever supposes guilt. Thus while they experienced the divine approbation in preparing their hearts to seek God, they needed his pardon for some external omissions.

You will recollect, Sir, that you have given it as your opinion, 'That the essence of baptism does not consist in

\* 1 Kings iii. 3. 2 Kings xii. 2, 3, and xv. 34, 35.

† 2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19.

any one particular mode whatever.' Undoubtedly this may be said, with as much propriety, respecting communion ; that the *essence* of it does not consist in any particular mode whatever ; but in right affections of heart.

If this observation be just, that the *essence* of an ordinance does not consist in the externals of it, but in sincerity of heart ; and that Christian communion does not require agreement in sentiment, but only a union of 'affections and desires ;' in this sense, I presume, the Baptists and Pædobaptists do cordially commune.

In remarking upon the motto of my other Piece, you have said, 'There must be a union between God and man, or they cannot commune together—there must be a cordial union. We must love the same objects which God loves, and hate that which he hates.' You suppose, 'the same kind of agreement is essential to our walking together.' Now, Sir, if this cordial affection and union can fully exist, and we disagree in one divine institution, why can it not, and we disagree in another ? Why is it thought more essential to our Christian fellowship and union to be agreed in the ordinance of the supper, than in the ordinance of baptism ? Or are there any reasons for exalting the former so much above the latter ? If agreement in sentiment be necessary to our Christian fellowship, then it can be of no consequence for us to be agreed in the ordinance of the supper. For according to this argument, two persons or churches may enjoy mutual communion together, although one of them should partake of the bread and wine, and the other sit by at the same time and not partake.

Upon the whole, I see nothing to forbid this conclusion, That we do commune with the Pædobaptists in the same sense which God does. We may not indeed in the same degree, as we have not the same degree of knowledge, with respect to their conformity to his moral image, or positive requirements ; but so far as we see them bearing the image of *truth*, so far we love and esteem them.

But, Sir, do you conceive that God communes with you in a higher, or different sense, in the ordinance of the supper, than what he does in the ordinance of baptism? If not, why may you not draw an argument equally forcible from that, to urge us to a compliance with your mode of baptism? I am willing to own, that I am enthusiastic enough to believe, that God as *really* manifests his all-approving presence with us in the ordinance of *baptism*, as in that of the *supper*. But, should we from hence urge the propriety of your adopting our mode of baptism, without producing any other proof in support of it, would you think the argument conclusive? Most certainly you would not.

You have taken it for granted, that God communes with the Pædobaptists, and that his example is worthy of imitation. But have we not as much reason to believe, that the baptism of Christ by an immersion in Jordan, was designed as an example for believers through every age, as that his communing with your denomination is designed as an example for us to imitate? But, the *sacrilegious* practice of imitating Jesus Christ in his baptism, has been loudly exploded, by the united efforts of two learned gentlemen,\* in a publication with this extraordinary title, "*The Baptism of Jesus Christ, not to be imitated by Christians.*" A person cannot reflect upon this title a moment, without concluding, that some Pædobaptists cautiously endeavour not to imitate the baptism of Jesus Christ! We can hardly forbear asking, Who do they mean to imitate? Surely not John; for they say he was under the *law*. Not Christ, because he was baptized before his death. Not Philip, and the Eunuch, for *they went down both INTO THE WATER*. Not the primitive church; for we are authorized, upon the testimony of Pædobaptists themselves, to say, that *immersion* was the universal practice (except in particular cases) for nearly *thirteen hundred years* after the Christian æra.

We cheerfully acknowledge that this is not the case with us; for we do really endeavour to *imitate the baptism of Christ*; nor did we ever yet feel conscious of

reproof, for the presumptuous act ! It is an argument of no small weight in the minds of many, that our baptism is an imitation of HIS, who has taught us to take up our cross and FOLLOW HIM. Were it not necessary to invite you to follow an example so evidently designed for imitation, I might address you in the spontaneous language of a *text* pressed into your service ; *Be ye followers of God, as dear children.*

Should you think the question not fully answered by what has been already observed, and still inquire, ‘If God communes with the Pædobaptists, why should you be unwilling to follow his example ?’—I would wish to ask, Whether you would think it duty for us to be followers of God, otherwise than according to the *rules* laid down in his word ? You will permit me to remind you, that you have acknowledged, that those *rules* require baptism antecedent to communion. This is evidently your meaning when you say, ‘I do not deny that baptism was *prior* to coming to the Lord’s table in the apostolic practice. I suppose it was.’ I suppose so too, Sir ; and would beg to know, whether there has been any different *rule* of practice established since ? If so, by whom was it done, and by what authority ? If the system of inspiration was closed by the apostles, then undoubtedly the practice of the church, as recorded by them, is a proper *rule* for us. To this you seem to assent (though with a degree of caution) when you say, ‘I also suppose their example to be worthy of imitation in like circumstances.’ As if some circumstances might take place, which might make it necessary to alter the *mode* or *order* of divine institutions. But, Sir, if institutions are *divine*, it is not in the power of *circumstances*, however combined, or any thing else short of the power which made them, to alter either *mode* or *order*. Some circumstances may render it necessary to omit, but never to alter an institution. The moment we alter an institution, we destroy its authority. It can no longer claim the high privilege of a *divine* origin ; but must be looked upon as the base-born offspring of human *invention*.



That there can be circumstances in our present situation which may render it necessary, or even justifiable, to depart from the *apostolic practice*, I cannot conceive. Yet here we are not so happy as to be agreed in opinion ; for you say—‘I am not certain that there can be no circumstances in which it might be lawful to admit to the Lord’s supper prior to baptism.’ Especially if the mode of baptism be immersion. ‘For a real Christian may for many years be subjected to such bodily disorders, that it would be presumption rather than duty, to be plunged all under water ; and yet at certain times he might be able to attend the ordinance of the Lord’s supper. And must he be debarred this privilege, or forbidden this duty, merely because he is unable to be immersed ?’\*

It appears to me, Sir, that you draw conclusions without premises. For you suppose we debar a person from a *privilege* in one instance because he is unable to do his *duty* in another. I suppose you are mistaken in both. For first, I do not believe that God requires any duty of his creatures, which his holy providence has rendered them unable to perform : which is the supposed case with regard to baptism. Nor secondly, do I believe that it is the duty or privilege of any person to attend one sacred ordinance, while God in his providence prevents his attending another, which has a *prior* claim on his obedience ; and while the *latter*, by ‘*apostolic practice*,’ is a necessary qualification for the *former*. This idea you have fully illustrated in your next page, where you observe, that ‘Many things which are ordinarily incumbent duties are not so in all circumstances.’ This observation appears perfectly just, and the very circumstance you have mentioned of the person’s being unbaptized, renders it inconsistent with duty for him to partake of the Lord’s supper.

For I can as easily conceive of its being a person’s duty or privilege to go to meeting, while by the providence of God he is confined at home ; as to believe that it is his duty to go to the communion-table, while

by the same providence, he is unable to attend the previous qualifications which the institution requires.

Allowing immersion to be essential to gospel baptism, and a person to become a real Christian when but nine years old, and the state of his health such as would render it unsuitable for him to be baptized, should he live to be nine hundred and sixty-nine, I should never suppose it to be his duty to communicate while in that situation ; nor can I suppose any well enlightened Christian would ever desire it.

But, should it even be supposed, that the order of the institutions might be dispensed with in particular cases, so far as to admit to communion pious persons, whose bodily infirmities would not allow of their being baptized—What then ? Shall we from hence argue to a general practice, and admit unbaptized persons to communion who have no such infirmities to plead ? If this be not the case, your argument loses the whole of its force ; unless your communicants are all *invalids* !

The inconclusiveness of this argument will more fully appear by attending to the observations you have brought to illustrate it by. The first is, the instance of David's taking the *shew bread*. You observe, ' He was hungry, and had need of it for the sustenance and preservation of life ;' but will you from hence conclude, that it was lawful for David, or any other person in ordinary cases, to have taken the *hallowed bread*, when there was no such necessity ? If this be not the case, it will not help your cause ; for the matter in dispute is not a case of *necessity*, but of supposed expediency ; and which, in order to its being practised, must be lawful in ordinary cases. Your other observation respecting a person's being necessarily detained from the house of God, is much of the same tenor : for granting that a person's infirmities may excuse him from the duty of attending public worship, shall we hence infer that this is any excuse for others, or even for the same person when well ? Surely we shall not.

You suppose when David violated a *positive precept*, he did it to preserve his life, and that in this sense he conducted himself agreeably to the *moral law*. Now,

Sir, when it can be made to appear, that a person's life, or eternal salvation, depend on communicating at the Lord's table, I cannot say but in such a case it may be lawful to go contrary to positive institutions ; to depart from *apostolic practice* ; and plunge ourselves into almost every inconsistency, *rather than a weak brother should perish, for whom Christ died.*

Your observations in favour of giving the communion to the sick who are not institutionally qualified to receive it, lead us to compare it with the ancient custom of baptizing the *clinics*.

A learned historian observes, "At first all times were alike, and persons were baptized as opportunity and occasion served ; but it was after restrained to two solemn and stated times of the year, viz. *Easter* and *Whitsuntide*." These included the fifty days between : "Yet if there was a *necessity*, (as in case of *sickness* and danger of *death*) they might be baptized at any other time."\* And notwithstanding they allowed immersion to be the proper mode, yet, in case of danger of death, they would sprinkle persons as they lay in their beds. It is evident they overrated the institution ; and your notion of giving the communion to the sick who are unable to be baptized, has a little of the same appearance.

I do not find that these ancient Christians plead apostolic authority for this practice, nor did they allow of this mode of baptism in ordinary cases.

But why should it be thought necessary for a real Christian to receive the communion, so long as his bodily infirmities forbid his being regularly baptized ? It cannot be thought necessary to his eternal salvation ; for if a Christian, that is already secured : nor that the gospel rule requires it ; for that enjoins, that *all things be done decently and in order* : nor yet the glory of God ; for that never requires submission to any *positive law*, but of those who are capable of the positive pre-requisites to obey it. Hence I conclude, that every unbaptized Christian, whose infirmities may be such, as to render it unsuitable for him to be baptized and join the visible church, ought submissively to wait, until

\* Dr. Cave's Primitive Christianity, p. 194.

God in his providence opens a door for him in a regular manner to approach his holy table ; and not to act foolishly like Saul, who grew impatient in waiting for Samuel, and *forced himself and offered a burnt-offering.\**

I have endeavoured thus far to trace your argument, and have not yet found sufficient reason to depart from the *apostolic practice* ; but as we are so happy as to be agreed in this point, that baptism according to their practice was *prior* to coming to the Lord's table, on this ground we will bring the matter to trial. Now, Sir, I would wish to ask, How we can consistently communicate with you ? If we communicate with you as *baptized* persons, we practically give up our principles ; if we communicate with you as *unbaptized*, then we unwarrantably depart from the apostolic practice. You cannot be insensible, my dear Sir, that this is the very *pith* of the controversy ; and that one or the other of the above difficulties will inevitably fall to our share, in case we establish communion with you.

It is a fact generally known, and which we do not wish to conceal, that we cannot acknowledge *infant sprinkling* to be *gospel baptism*. Could this be allowed, the dispute would be at an end, and our sentiments at an end with it. For if the institution requires no more than *sprinkling*, then *plunging* must be forever unnecessary ; and besides, we shall be justly chargeable with re-baptizing, a practice we condemn as much as you do. But you seem to be willing that we should be Baptists, and yet blame us for not communicating with other denominations. But, why do you not *lay the axe to the root of the tree*, and blame us for being Baptists, and not blame us for being consistent ?

I doubt not but every unprejudiced mind will readily perceive that the matter comes to this point with us, that in order to communicate with you, we must either give up what you and we agree was the apostolic practice, or our sentiments as Baptists. One or the other of these will be a rational inference from our conduct.

From what has now been observed, it will be easy to perceive the different situations we stand in to each

other. When persons join your churches, who have been baptized by us, I have never heard of your baptizing them again. On the other hand, we always baptize those who come from your churches to us, unless they have been immersed upon a profession of faith. But is this difference of conduct to be attributed to catholicism in you, or the want of it in us? By no means. The truth is this, *immersion* includes *sprinkling*; but *sprinkling* does not include *immersion*: therefore the person who is immersed, is in your view lawfully baptized; whilst he who is only sprinkled, is not so in ours. It hence follows, that, consistently with your sentiments and views of the '*apostolic practice*,' you may invite us to communicate in your churches; while we, having the same views, cannot invite you.

It is hoped that the preceding observations will fully satisfy our Pædobaptist brethren, that our reasons for not communicating with them do not arise from the want of brotherly affection towards them; but from a conscientious regard to what we understand to be *the order of the gospel*.

So long as we allow the gospel to contain a complete system of faith and practice, we must endeavour to follow the rules there given, rather than imitate other supposed parts of the divine conduct.

But should we even carry the matter as high as you have supposed; that Christ should personally come to one of your communions, and actually partake with you; and should address you as his friends, and bid you eat and drink; I am not certain that his conduct in so doing would call for our imitation, so long as the established laws of his kingdom remain as they now are.

When Christ first commissioned his disciples, and sent them forth to preach the gospel, heal the sick, &c.—*he commanded them saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.\** Nevertheless, he himself went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and there healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, who was a Gentile.† He also passed

\* Matt. x. 5.

† Mark vii. 24—30.



through Samaria ; conversed with the woman at the well, where he made known himself to her as the Messiah. And afterwards, at the request of the people, he tarried two days ; in which time *many more believed on him.\** Hence we see, that Christ did those things which his disciples were not authorized to do. Therefore I conclude we are to follow the particular rules laid down by Christ in his word, rather than any supposed appearances or manifestations he may make to his people in any way whatever. If this be not the case, we are likely to ramble in eternal uncertainty ! But, blessed be God, *we have a more sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed.*

It may be proper here to take notice of the consequences you have drawn, from the supposition of our proving, that a conformity to our *mode* of baptism is an essential term of communion. You say, ‘ Should this be made to appear, it will then also appear, that all the Pædobaptists, who have thought they enjoyed communion with God at his table, have been *most miserably deluded.*’ If so, the consequence is dreadful indeed ! Enough to shock the tender feelings of every pious Pædobaptist, and lay an effectual *bar* in the way of their admitting the evidence of a truth so disgusting, though shining with the greatest clearness. You also conclude, that if baptism in our mode be an essential qualification ; ‘ then the Pædobaptists are essentially wrong and *wicked* in coming to the table ;’ and their conduct an *abomination* in the sight of God.† My dear Sir, are you so intoxicated with sentiment as to forget your own system ? No farther back than page 20, you have said, ‘ I deny that there can be any *moral evil* in conduct which proceeds from godly sincerity ; yet I grant there may be *natural evil*, or incongruity, through inadvertency or misapprehension.’ Is it possible that ‘ *natural evil*’ or ‘ *incongruity*,’ should account for all the frightful things now mentioned, such as ‘ *miserable delusion*,’ ‘ *wicked*’ conduct, even such as is ‘ *abomination* in the sight of God ?’ If not, your argument fails in one or the other :

\* John iv. 26, 39, 40. † Page 28.

either your conduct must be chargeable with *moral evil*, or your consequences cannot be just.

In your next page you go on to say, ‘Granting that immersion be the *appointed* mode of baptism, and believers the *only* proper subjects, yet if a Pædobaptist *really think* otherwise, and with an obedient heart offer up his children in our mode, his conduct is not chargeable with any *moral evil*. All the evil which is to be imputed to his conduct, is of the *natural* kind. And the person in so doing is as well accepted in the sight of God, as if his external conduct had been according to the appointed mode of baptism.’ It is peculiar indeed, that with regard to the institution of *baptism*, you should conclude, that if you honestly mistake both the *subjects* and *mode*, and practise in a way entirely different, it by no means hinders the divine approbation and acceptance ; but with regard to the ordinance of the *supper*, if it should be proved that you had *as* honestly made a mistake with regard to a previous duty, and have thought that you enjoyed communion with God at his table, the consequence must be, that you have all been *miserably deluded* ! \*

According to the above argument, all that is necessary to render baptism acceptable, is only to ‘*really think*’ you are right : hence by a parity of reasoning, if you are not accepted of God in the ordinance of the supper, we must suppose you do not ‘*really think*’ you are right when you come to the table. But are you not as sincere in coming to the Lord’s table, as in offering up your children ? If you are not, I shall join with you, that your conduct is an abomination to the Lord. But, allowing you to be sincere, and to really think you are right, and we must suppose that you have as much reason to think you have been ‘*miserably deluded*’ in the *former*, as in the *latter*.

Thus, Sir, I have endeavoured carefully to attend to the argumentative part of your *Friendly Letter*, and have attempted to answer those arguments on which I supposed you laid the greatest stress ; either in a direct way, or by showing the invalidity of the evidence by which they were supported. And however an impar-

tial public may judge, I have the satisfaction to think, that in the preceding sheets the following particulars have been fairly established, by evidence from scripture, reason, and the concurring testimony of many eminent Pædobaptist writers. 1. That visible, or professing believers, are the *only proper subjects of baptism*, known and described in the word of God. 2. That an entire immersion in water, is necessary to the due administration of the ordinance. 3. That by apostolic practice, which is a standing law to the church of Christ, baptism *was*, and therefore still *is*, prior to coming to the Lord's table. Hence it follows, by 'necessary consequence,' that a conformity to *our mode* of baptism (if that has been proved to be the gospel mode) is to be considered as a necessary pre-requisite or (if it suits you better) *term* of communion at the Lord's table, so long as we think it important to follow the '*apostolic practice*.' We do not mean by this to dictate to our brethren of other denominations with regard to their terms of communion; but only show the general principles on which we proceed among ourselves.

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## SECTION IX.

*Observations on the Plan of Communion proposed in the 'Friendly Letter,' with remarks on several other Things connected with the Subject.*

SIR, your professed design in writing, has too much of the appearance of friendship, to be passed over unnoticed. But whether if your plan were adopted, it would produce the desired effect, is a matter of serious inquiry.

'To promote the peace and prosperity of Zion, by opening a door for free communion between the Baptists and Pædobaptists,' is your professed object. And notwithstanding I have appeared upon the other side of

the question, I persuade myself, that no person would be happier in seeing our objections fairly removed, and a consistent way pointed out for a mutual interchange of communions. But if it must be done at the expense of our *sentiments* as Baptists, you will not think us unreasonable in requiring ample proof that we are wrong, before we do it.

The particular boundaries of your plan are expressed in the following words ; ‘ It is not my design, nor my desire, to have a door open for free communion among all who *profess* religion on either side ; but only with regard to those whose visible conduct is evidential of real piety.’ It is a little difficult here to understand your meaning. If you mean to establish communion with some churches which you may consider as orthodox in doctrine, and regular in discipline, while you reject others, your plan may be practicable. But as the terms or qualifications you propose, may be the lot of individuals rather than churches, it appears to be attended with some difficulty. For it is reasonable to suppose that in every Christian community there may be some found, ‘ whose visible conduct is evidential of real piety.’ With those it seems you would wish to communicate, while with the church as a body you could by no means hold fellowship.

In order to reduce the idea to practice, we will suppose ten members of a Baptist church in your vicinity attend at one of your communion seasons, with a desire to enjoy privileges with you ; but when the church is called upon to act upon their request, they inform those brethren that with five of them they are fully satisfied, and bid them a cordial welcome to a seat in their communion ; but to the others they observe, they have not obtained the evidence of their ‘ real piety ;’ and therefore must conscientiously refuse to partake with them. It is natural to suppose that the feelings of these brethren would be wounded upon such an occasion ; some on their own account, and some on account of others. And the church to which they belong might consider themselves injured ; and it is likely the effect would be

contention, rather than peace. Difficulties similar to the above are fairly supposable.

If you please, Sir, we will now suppose a different case. It so happens, that several of your brethren remove into the neighbourhood of a Baptist church, and from their situation are desirous of enjoying privileges with them. The Baptists, enlightened by your sentiments, are equally desirous of indulging them; and although these brethren have not received baptism in the way which the church understand the institution, yet as they appear to be *sincere*, which 'is the very SOUL and ESSENCE of conformity to Christ,' the church cordially grant their request. For a season they enjoy privileges together, and no particular difficulty arises; but at length one of those communicants becomes dissatisfied with respect to his infant baptism; and in the exercise of godly *sincerity* is led to believe, that it is his indispensable duty to be immersed. But while waiting a convenient opportunity for that purpose, a communion season intervenes; it now becomes a serious question, both with him and the church, whether it be duty for him to communicate in his present situation? As the church adopted this new mode of communion in conformity to your system, they think proper to recur to it, in order to decide the present doubtful case. They first consult the terms on which you propose free communion; these they find to be '*real piety*' or '*godly sincerity*.' That the man was a subject of these qualifications when they first admitted him, they have no doubt; and they are equally satisfied of his *sincerity* and *piety* with his present views; and at first are inclined to think it may be his duty to communicate. But there is one difficulty still which seems to embarrass their proceeding; that is, if they understand you right, (p. 9) it is not a question with you, 'Whether baptism in *some* mode be an *essential* qualification.' And although the person once *sincerely* believed himself to be baptized, he now *as* sincerely believes he is not; and 'as a man *thinketh in his heart so is he*.' For the scripture being '*silent* respecting his infant baptism,' the only thing which gave it validity, either with himself or the



church, was his sincerity ; but *that* failing in this particular, *this* must consequently fail with it ; and he can no longer be considered as baptized, than while he sincerely believes himself to be so. He is now, in his own view, and in the view of the church, unbaptized. And I cannot see but that he must appear in the same light to you, upon your own scale of reasoning. But, however, he is unquestionably possessed of *real piety* and *godly sincerity*, which are your distinguishing terms of communion ; and yet, as he is in his own opinion unbaptized, he lacks an ‘ *essential qualification*.’ It follows, that by your system he is both qualified, and unqualified, at the same time.

Besides, the Baptist church would not appear in the most consistent light, to baptize a person with whom they had probably communed several years ; and yet the man cannot act consistently with godly sincerity without it. Upon the whole, I am inclined to think, when you review your plan in its operation, you will conclude some amendments are necessary.

In connexion with your design, you have another observation, upon which I shall make one or two remarks. You say, ‘ I shall neglect to pay any particular attention to the subject of *infant baptism* ; not because that I think our side fails of scripture evidence, but because many abler hands have been employed on the subject, and because I think it to be needless with respect to the subject of close communion.’ This observation appears a little extraordinary, and that for two reasons. 1. That you should suggest that the scripture affords ample proof in favour of your sentiments ; and yet in another part of your Letter, (p. 35) if I do not much mistake, you make this honest concession, *That the scripture as to infant baptism is SILENT !* Strange indeed ! Full of *evidence*, and yet *silent !* entirely silent ! We cheerfully yield you the unmolested enjoyment of all the evidence which infant baptism can derive from the *silence of scripture* respecting it.\* 2. That you should

\* That the scripture is *silent*, is acknowledged by Mr. Clark. “ The Pædobaptists (saith he) do not place the evidence of infant baptism, in the history of fact, or in any express mention of it in the New Testa-

suppose that *infant baptism* is not connected with the subject in dispute. I suppose, Sir, that it is particularly connected; for it is entirely upon the supposition of its *validity*, that you claim a right to communicate with us. Therefore, had you brought forward that testimony from scripture which you inform us your ‘side does not fail of,’ and had proved by *example* or *precept*, (I mean not by *silent* evidence, however) that infant baptism was of divine appointment, this would have ended the whole dispute.\* You cannot be insensible that this objection has always been made on our part, and to me it appears rational and important. I endeavoured carefully to state it in my other Piece, and as yours is said to contain *an answer to it*, I did not expect it in this way, that ‘you should neglect to say any thing about it.’

It may be proper in the next place to attend to the manner in which you answer a *case* proposed in my other Piece. The case was plain, and I humbly conceive quite to the point in hand. The substance of the question was this; Had Enoch, Noah, or Melchizedeck, been contemporary with Moses, would he have permitted them to communion in the paschal supper while uncircumcised? Or had Noah been present when the tabernacle was erected, and had been disposed to have given the people a sermon, upon the incarnation of the Son of God, and the righteousness of faith, of which that sacred structure was typical, would not Moses and the people have cheerfully heard him? And yet the positive law of Jehovah would have forbidden his partaking at the paschal feast.

ment. No man ever pretended it” “That if there be no direct evidence for infant baptism from the historical relation of facts in the New Testament, surely no argument against it can be made out from the *silence* of the sacred writers in reference thereunto.” Defence of infant baptism, p. 79, 85

\* To admit that the silence of scripture respecting any point in dispute affords full evidence in its favour, appears to me as irrational as to admit the evidence of the watch set to keep the body of Jesus, who declared that his disciples stole him away while THEY SLEPT!

To this you answer, ‘ We shall not dispute but that Moses would have admitted those ambassadors to preach ; being convinced of their divine commission. Nor would he have forbidden their partaking of the paschal feast, had they been circumcised, whether it were done in infancy or adult age, before or after believing, with a knife, a razor, a scythe, a sickle, or even a sharp stone.’

Sir, did you think this would be considered as an answer ? It certainly will not. Instead of looking the argument fairly in the face, you have endeavoured quite to evade it.

You agree that Moses would have admitted those ambassadors to preach. The question then was, whether he would have received them to the paschal feast, while uncircumcised ? Instead of a direct answer, you reply, ‘ Nor would he have forbidden their partaking of the paschal feast had they *been* circumcised.’ True, Sir ; nor will your victory cost you any thing ; for this point was never disputed. You proceed to remark several circumstances respecting circumcision ; but take particular care not to mention any which would affect the validity of the *rite*. Nor are the cases parallel between the circumstances mentioned, and that of infant baptism. This will sufficiently appear by what follows : as 1. ‘ Whether it were done in infancy or adult age,’ no matter which ; for infants of *eight days old* were expressly mentioned in the institution, and they were commanded on that day to circumcise them ; and repeated examples from scripture prove that it was done. Let the right of infants to baptism be as fairly made out, and the point will be given up. 2. Whether ‘ before or after believing ;’ this was entirely immaterial. For the command was, *And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed—must needs be circumcised.\** It hence follows, that *believing* was not required in the subjects for circumcision, nor yet that the *parents* should be believers ; for the

\* Gen. xvii. 12, 13.

child of an idolatrous heathen, bought for a slave, had as fair a claim to that institution, as any of the believing sons of Abraham. This cannot be said of the gospel institution ; for when one said, See here is water ; what doth hinder me to be baptized ? The reply was, *If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.\** And although some believing parents claim the privilege of baptism for their children, I do not remember to have heard that any ever did for their *servants*. Nor does the benevolent doctrine of infant baptism make any provision for the ill-fated infant, whose parents are both unbelievers. 3. Whether circumcision were performed ‘with a knife, a razor, a scythe, a sickle, or even a sharp stone,’ we acknowledge it equally valid, providing the rite was performed. So likewise should we look upon baptism to be valid if performed in Jordan, in the *Tiber*, in a *pond*, in a *pool*, in a *cistern*, in a *font*, or in any other place where water could conveniently be had sufficient to immerse in.

But if you please, Sir, we will vary the circumstances a little. If instead of performing the rite upon the part appointed, a person had opened a vein in his *arm*, cut off the end of his *toe*, his *thumb*, or the tip of his *right ear* ; had either of these been performed with all the solemnities of the other rite, it cannot be supposed that it would have been accepted for circumcision. And yet, perhaps, the dissimilarity is not greater between either of the supposed cases and the commanded rite, than between sprinkling and immersion.

We will now take notice of what you observe (p. 31) You say, ‘It has been difficult for us to see the consistency of your conduct, in refusing to commune at the Lord’s table with our denomination ; while at the same time, you practically acknowledge our Ministers to be authorized and qualified to preach the gospel.’ That we are perfectly free from inconsistency will not be pretended ; nor do we think that a compliance with your mode of communion, would free us from the charge. Perhaps with our present different views, we cannot act more consistently than to follow the advice given by

the apostle ; “ Whereto we have already *attained*, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”\* We have *attained* to an agreement in praying to the same God and Father of all ; and also in preaching the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. But we have not attained to an agreement with respect to the subjects and mode of baptism ; nor in the visible qualifications of communicants for the Lord’s table. How can two walk together except they be agreed ? But must we be charged with inconsistency, for not disagreeing in the things we are agreed in, or merely because we are agreed in some things, and not in all ? If so, we must patiently submit to the charge, until the happy time comes when we shall see *eye to eye*.

Although we do not think of clearing ourselves of inconsistency, by charging your conduct with the same ; yet it may not be improper here to inquire, whether your conduct towards us in some instances, be quite consistent with your professions of friendship in establishing *free* communion with us ? If you consider us as a branch of Christ’s church, with whom you would be willing to enjoy Christian communion, why do you refuse to dismiss and recommend your members to us, when they are in good standing in your churches, and wish to join ours ? I conclude, Sir, you are sensible that this privilege has been generally denied, and this reason has been often assigned for the denial ; That to dismiss a member to a Baptist church, would be to acknowledge it a church of Christ. But would you be willing to communicate with any who do not belong to his church ? You certainly would not.

Permit me, Sir, to mention one thing more. Why are your pulpits so frequently denied to the Ministers of our denomination ? Is it because they are heterodox in doctrine, or vicious in their conduct ? They are not charged with either. Is it because they may want literary accomplishments ? This might be imagined, were it not that those who possess them are often denied as well as others. Is it because we do not communicate with you at the table ? If you complain of our being



uncharitable in this, remember you are not to render evil for evil ; but contrariwise.\*

These objections are not to be taken indiscriminately ; no, many of our Pædobaptist brethren meet us upon the most friendly terms ; reciprocal love and esteem mingle in our society ; and although we pretend *not to have dominion over each other's faith, yet we become helpers of one another's joy.*†

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## SECTION X.

*Several Objections particularly answered.—The Subject concluded.*

SIR, I cannot do justice to myself and the denomination to which I belong, without taking notice of several charges which you have brought against us. In the first place, you have charged me with ‘quoting scripture’ in a method calculated to mislead the ignorant and inattentive ;’ of ‘arrogancy and uncharitableness ;’ and of ‘having done great injury to the apostle Paul.’ (Page 17; 35, 38.)

The first instance of which you complain, is in the following words ; “Sincerity is not the term of communion ; but being conformed to the apostles’ doctrine, and continuing stedfastly therein. Acts ii. 42.” Upon which you thus observe ; ‘From the manner of your citing, or rather alluding, to this text, it would be natural to expect that upon examination we should find the inspired writer describing the terms of communion.’ I conclude, Sir, upon examination this does abundantly

\* Perhaps some who have thus been denied, by their ‘sincere’ but differing brethren, have been indulged with the spacious temple of their royal Master, and with much the same accommodations which he had. Whilst ‘The Lord of lords and King of kings, is neither afraid nor ashamed’ to accompany them to some friendly *shade*, or to a humble *stall*, resembling the birth-place of Immanuel ; and there blesses their labours to the comfort and salvation of his people.

† 2 Cor. i. 24.

appear. Nor am I convinced, that the passage is not pertinent to the purpose for which it was cited ; and if it does not describe the terms of communion, I know not of any one which does. ‘ But (you say) instead of this, we find him simply relating the conduct of some young converts, who had been already admitted to communion.’ But, Sir, do you not mistake ? He is here describing the very manner in which these converts were admitted ; and which fully shows the ‘ apostolic practice.’

But what is the account given of their proceedings ? You answer, ‘ Let us read the 41st and 42d verses in connexion.’ *Then they who gladly received the word were baptized ; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* And were they not baptized until they received the word ? No, they were not ; and were they baptized and no others ? The scripture is totally ‘ silent’ as to any others. Nor did they join the body of believers or church, until they received the word, and were baptized. You say, ‘ They had already been admitted to communion.’ I would beg to know, where you find any account of their having been admitted before this ?

You farther observe, ‘ That any person of good discernment may see, that in this text there is no appearance of design to ascertain the terms of communion.’ Let the design be what it may, here is evidently ascertained the apostolic practice ; and the exact manner, step by step, in which they proceeded to communion.

The passage of scripture which you introduce, as being so very apposite to your mode of communion, and on which you lay much stress, is this ; ‘ *Be ye followers of God as dear children.*’ The ‘ discerning reader’ will now judge, whether in this passage there is any greater ‘ appearance of design, to ascertain the terms of communion,’ than in the one which I alluded to. But, however, “ If to be conformed to the apostles’ doctrine, and continuing stedfastly in it,” be a dangerous practice, and ‘ calculated to mislead the ignorant and inattentive,’ we

should be glad to see the danger pointed out, and a better system of doctrine proposed for imitation.

In my other Piece, in answering several pleas in favour of free communion, I observed that it had been urged, "That the scripture account of baptism, was left in so much darkness and ambiguity, both as to the subjects and mode, that nothing certain could be determined." In remarking upon which I made the following observation; "It may be remembered that when the talents were committed to the servants to occupy, the two who improved made no complaints; the other had a hard master, an austere man, and a great many difficulties stood in the way of duty." After making your sarcastical paraphrase upon my observation, you bring forward your charge of 'arrogancy and uncharitableness;' to which it may be replied—The observation was designed entirely for those who make the above plea; and no one will feel himself injured by the application, if he be not the character described. And however 'arrogant and uncharitable' it may appear, thus to blame the conduct of those who bring forward the *plea*, so long as they are considered only as servants; it cannot be thought *more so*, than the plea itself, against Christ our royal master.

To plead the want of sufficient light in the scriptures, as the reason of our wrong sentiments, is indeed to impeach Christ. "To suppose this, (saith Dr. Hopkins) is a reproach on divine revelation, and the Author of it, and an implicit denial that it comes from God."\*

But lastly, you accuse me of having 'done great injury to the apostle Paul.' If it be so I shall be sorry indeed. But what have I done to the apostle? Why you say, 'You have quoted his words without any appearance of regard to the connexion.' And what then? Is this injuring the apostle? Are we never to use the words of the inspired writers in any other sense than what they did? Do not the best writers frequently quote scripture (by way of accommodation, or for the sake of the phrase) without attending strictly to the connexion? In short, have you not frequently done it

\* Vid. System, Vol. ii. p. 363.

yourself? One or two of your quotations will determine the matter. ‘*As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.*’ Did you attend to the connexion here, and use the words in the same sense which the royal preacher did? It is evident you did not. Again, when you would fix the charge of inconsistency upon us, for refusing to communicate with those with whom you suppose Christ communes, you can introduce the apostle Paul as exhorting the Baptists, ‘to be followers of God as dear children.’ I shall not say that you have ‘greatly injured the apostle;’ but I hardly think that in the passage above, he had reference to our communicating with you at the Lord’s table.

The passage which I quoted was the following; “Now we command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother who walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”\* In applying this to my brethren, I observed, “It *may* be your duty to withdraw from them whom you consider as not conformed to the *tradition* of the apostles, so far, as not to partake together at the Lord’s table.” No candid mind can be at a loss, as to the exact sense in which I used the apostle’s words; nor can they think that I used the word *tradition* absolutely in the same sense which he did. His words are quite in the *imperative*, mine in the mild *subjunctive* mood.

You have been pleased to style St. Paul an ‘*eminent peace maker* ;’ and have collected many passages of scripture to prove, that to this end ‘*he was made all things to all men,*’ (not for the sake of communicating with them, but) ‘*that he might by all means SAVE some.*’ But shall we, from the condescending light in which you have represented the apostle, conclude, that if he were among the Baptists, he would become a Baptist; and fully approve of their *mode* of baptism, and of their *denying* the right of infants, while at the same time he might know, that the institution did not require the *former*, and that it expressly enjoined the *latter*? Or on the other hand, if he were among the Pædobaptists, shall we suppose

him *one* with them ; and that he would cordially approve of their mode of baptizing infants, when at the same time he might know, that neither *subjects* nor *mode* were according to the institution ? Would sober reason venerate such a character as this ? No. It would look upon him as an unprincipled *time-server*.

To suppose that St. Paul would conform to every party which he might occasionally be among, would be to make him resemble that *peculiar animal*, which partakes of the colour of every substance which it happens to be upon ! I confess, I form no such opinion of this great apostle's catholicism ; but conclude, were he among us, he would say to those in the right, "*Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.*" But to those in the wrong, "*Now in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not.*"\*

But we pass on,

*Secondly*, To consider the charges which you exhibit against our sentiments. In your viiith. part you proceed to show, what appears to you to be the natural tendency of our sentiments and practice ; and finally conclude, that they 'tend to break up all churches, and to destroy all visible communion among Christians.'† If this be the case, no wonder you are alarmed. But, Sir, you mistake. The churches of our denomination in America, contain upwards of *sixty thousand members*, which hold visible communion together : nor did I ever know, that any attempt had been made on our part, to destroy the visible communion of Christians in general. And certainly, were our sentiments universally to operate, they would unite in one great body all Christians to the ends of the earth.

\* 1 Cor. xi. 2, 17.

† Although I have not written documents to prove, yet I have credible information, that a Conference or Council was some time since called at West Stockbridge, to advise, whether it were consistent for the two denominations in that place to build a church, and walk together. It was unanimously agreed in the negative. Two of the Pædobaptist Ministers were, Rev. Dr. WEST, Rev. Mr. CAMP. Baptists, Rev. Messrs. WORDEN, and BLOOD.



But you object again and say, ‘ Your sentiment and practice tend to lead people to place the *essence* of religion in the external observance of ceremonial institutions, to the neglect of the weightier matters of the law.’

This, Sir, is not true. For our sentiments carry the fullest demonstration to the contrary. It is a fact universally known, that no person can be admitted as a member in a Baptist church, let his *externals* be what they may, without sufficient evidence that he has experienced a change of heart, and has become a real Christian. We do not baptize persons to make them Christians, but because we look upon them to be such already. And it is well known, that a person cannot be accepted with us, on account of *lineal* descent from Abraham, or any other believer ; nor by virtue of a pretended *federal* holiness ; nor can they make a profession by *proxy* or *sponsors* ; but by their own voluntary act. We never baptize persons out of our ordinary way, who are in danger of death ; nor do we ever give the communion to any who are unbaptized. How then can you possibly say, with any appearance of modesty or justice, that our ‘ sentiments tend to lead people to place the *essence* of religion in the external observance of ceremonial institutions ?’

You follow this charge with a number of ungenerous reflections upon the Ministers of our denomination. To make this appear, I would only ask ; Were I to charge your Ministers with ‘ taking up much of their time in *public* and in *private*, disputing about’ infant baptism ; and should have the vanity to say, they had better ‘ inculcate upon their hearers the nature and importance of universal benevolence, the duties of brotherly love, justice, mercy, and compassion ; to live useful lives, serving their generation by the will of God ;’ (as if these were almost, if not entirely neglected ; and should assure them, that if they would take my advice) ‘ they would do much more good in the world, appear much less like the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*,’ which *they* now resemble, ‘ and much more like CHRIST and his APOSTLES,’ which *we* so exactly imitate ; would you not think me justly chargeable with ‘ *arrogancy* and *unchar-*

*itableness* ? I leave the matter to your own feelings. A word to the wise is sufficient.

Another thing you charge us with, is, that we lay an ‘*undue stress*’ upon the ordinance of baptism, or at least upon our particular mode. This comes rather with an ill grace, from one of a denomination, which evidently make as much, if not more of the ordinance than we do.

But we will not rest the matter here, without a fair examination. Do we insist on baptism in *any* mode, as *essential* to salvation ? You allow that we do not. Do we place it in the room of *redeeming blood*, and think that by our immersion we wash away our sins ? No, you acquit us from this also. Do we look upon it as an institution of Christ, which we are sacredly bound to observe ? We do ; and so do you. Do we look upon it as an enjoined pre-requisite to communion ? We do ; and so do Pædobaptists in general. But how does it appear then that we lay an ‘*undue stress*’ upon it ? Why you say, ‘*I verily fear* !’—(quite a conclusive way of arguing ; but go on) ‘*I verily fear*, that with many, a change in *sentiment* in favour of your opinion, has been allowed great weight as an evidence of a *real change of heart*.’ I wish, Sir, you had proved the matter, instead of suggesting your fears. But you add, ‘*It has been frequently mentioned by those of your denomination, as an evidence of great self-denial, for a person to be a Baptist, or to be plunged. And when I hear such things, it always excites fears in my mind.*’—Sir, the mere thoughts of a person’s being *plunged*, seems to have struck you with a hydrophobia, and quite agitated your mind !—But let us try calmly to examine the matter.

It will probably be granted, that the time has been, when it required some degree of *self-denial* to be a Baptist ; when the *pen* of the historian, and the *tongue* of the orator, were invidiously employed, in representing us in the most ridiculous and whimsical light ; while the *pulpit* thundered, and the *press* groaned with heavy charges against the daring innovators. At the same time, the *civil law* added its *mild* discipline of *ejection*,

*banishment, and proscription.* But thanks be to Heaven, a milder morn has dawned upon us; the cross is lightened, and we have few complaints of this kind to make.

It may be proper now to consider, what *stress* has been, and *is*, laid upon this ordinance, by Pædobaptists. It was said by our Saviour, "Except a man be born of *water*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This passage was very early expounded literally of water baptism, and the consequence admitted, that no person could be saved without it. Hence all infants dying unbaptized, inevitably perished.

In the year 416, a council was held at Mela in Numidia, in order to establish a law to compel Christians to baptize their infants. They issued twenty-seven new commandments, among which are the following. "It is the pleasure of all the bishops present in this holy synod to order, 1. That whosoever saith Adam was created mortal, and would have died, if he had not sinned; be accursed. 2. Also it is the pleasure of the bishops to order, that whosoever denieth that infants newly born of their mothers are to be baptized, or saith that baptism is to be administered for the remission of their own sins, but not on account of original sin derived from Adam, and to be *expiated* by the laver of regeneration; be accursed."\*

In the reign of the emperor Charlemagne, a law was established, making it death for a man to refuse to be baptized; and a heavy fine was levied on the parent, who did not have his child baptized within the year. But as at first they only baptized at two times in the year, it was found that many died between; to remedy which, priests were empowered to baptize at any time, and in any place, in case of sickness. When it was remarked that a priest was not always at hand, new canons

\* Vñ. Council. Milvian, in Robinson. "An honest indignation, (says a historian) rises at the sound of such tyranny; and if a man were driven to the necessity of choosing one saint out of two candidates, it would not be Austin, it would be Saint Balaam, the son of Bofor, who indeed loved the wages of unrighteousness, as many other saints have done; but who with all his madness had respect enough for the Deity to say, *How shall I curse wh m God hath not cursed.*"

empowered him to depute others to perform the ceremony, and midwives were licensed. It happened sometimes, while the midwife was baptizing a child not likely to live many minutes, the mother was neglected and died. It was finally decreed, that any body, licensed or unlicensed, a Jew, or degraded priest, a scullion or felon, might baptize.\*

Let us now attend to an instance of a later date. About the year 1690, there were two dissenting Ministers in Wapping. Hercules Collins, who taught a Baptist congregation; and Francis Mence, who taught a congregation of Independents. Collins published a book of reasons for believers' baptism, in which he observed, among other things, that there was no "reason to baptize an infant under pretence of saving it; for that original sin was not washed off by baptismal water, but by the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness." Mence thought it his duty to guard his congregation from this error; and he both preached and printed, that this was "*infant-damning doctrine.*" "The principle (he said) evidently excluded dear infants from the kingdom of God, which was an audacious cruelty; sending them by swarms into hell!" Collins attempted to explain himself, and vindicate his doctrine—but all in vain. The opposition rose to such a height, that his life was endangered; the streets resounding with the cries of tender mothers, who shrieked as they sold fish, "*There goes Collins, who holds the damnation of infants.*"† And all this because he denied the necessity of baptism to their salvation. But the sentiments of the present day, next call for our attention.

The *form* of service now in use among our brethren of the Episcopal church, leads us to suppose, that they ascribe quite as much efficacy to the ordinance as we do. For they, immediately after baptizing, make the following address: "Seeing, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is *regenerate*, and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks to Almighty God for

\* Robinson's Hist. p. 427. And Primitive Christianity, p. 192.

† Robinson's History, p. 476.

these benefits.—We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to *regenerate* this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for *thine own child by adoption.*” And when the children are thought capable of catechetical instruction, the catechist thus interrogates; “Who gave thee this name? My sponsors in my baptism, WHEREIN I WAS MADE a *member* of Christ, a *child* of God, and an *inheritor* of the kingdom of heaven”\* Dr. Hopkins, when speaking of the Westminster Catechism, takes notice of this answer; “Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name, &c. *doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ.*—This catechism is received by the church of Scotland, and by all, or most of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches in England, Ireland, and America; and taught to their children.” He then adds, “If baptism signifies and seals what it is here said to do; then infants, when they are baptized, are visibly, or in the view of the church, *ingrafted into Christ*, and *made* partakers of the blessings of the covenant of grace.”†

Now, Sir, let us just collect these scattered rays of evidence to a *focus*.—To conclude that all who die unbaptized eternally “perish;” to “levy heavy fines” to oblige parents to baptize their children; to “license even *midwives* to baptize, rather than it should not be done; to “*curse*” those who deny the necessity of it to the salvation of infants; to call the denial of it “*infant-damning doctrine*,” to thank God that the infant by baptism is “*regenerated*,” to teach children to believe, that in their baptism they were “*made members of Christ, and children of God*,” and that baptism *doth signify, and seal their ingrafting into Christ*, and that they are *thereby made* partakers of the blessings of the covenant of grace.

It, after attending to the evidence here exhibited, the charge against us of laying an “*undue stress*” upon baptism should be continued; the author of the ‘Friendly Letter’ is modestly requested to produce proof

\* Vid. The office of public baptism of infants, and the catechism.

† System, Vol. ii. p. 394.



from the writings of the Baptists to show, that they ascribe any greater efficacy to it than their Pædobaptist brethren do.\*

The last thing which I shall remark upon, is a 'query' which you suggest in the following words: 'May it not be owing to the manner in which *some* preachers of your denomination have treated the subject of baptism, that so many professors of your sect have turned *Deists, Shakers, Universalists, &c.*?' Upon this I would briefly observe; It is thought you would have acted more consistently with your title page, and other professions of candour, that if you had known any instances in which the *subject* had been *so* treated, to have pointed them out to the imprudent teacher, rather than to have cast the *flur* indiscriminately upon the whole denomination. But, Sir, we cannot admit the supposed fact to be true. For although it may be difficult to determine the exact number of *Deists, Shakers, and Universalists*, and what their sentiments have heretofore been; yet we think ourselves under as good advantages to know the state of our churches, as any others can be: for we have an annual correspondence with them from the district of *Maine* to the state of *Georgia*; and also with our brethren on the other side the *Atlantic*. Hence we are confident, that if *they* principally originate from us, their number must be small.

But should it even be allowed, that a greater number of our denomination had gone over to the above sentiments than from any other, will it hence follow, that

\* It is a question with some thinking persons, whether to teach children to believe, that by baptism they are "regenerated" and "ingrafted into Christ, and made partakers of the blessings of the covenant of grace," is not laying an undue stress upon the ordinance?—I will add the sentiment of a late writer "A virtuous profession," saith he, "of the Christian religion is founded in faith in Christ, and from this first element all after actions naturally flow: but where, as in professing infants, the primordial element is not and cannot be, religion rises on a postulatum, or assumed proof. The lives of such nominal Christians give too much evidence, that they are Christians only by prepossessions, and hence come innumerable errors, passions and vices. Having no reasons of their own for either faith or virtue, they know nothing of the religion which they profess, and avoid none of the crimes it was intended to destroy."

it was because they had once been ‘plunged all under water?’ Do you seriously think that one in thirty would acknowledge, that any circumstances connected with their being immersed, led them to embrace those sentiments? It is doubted whether this would appear upon examination.

You inform us that you ‘suggest *this* query without any design to reproach.’ Sir, your *design* falls not within our jurisdiction to judge; but the *query itself*, we are obliged to view as a groundless, illiberal reflection.

If the cause you are engaged in cannot be supported by *sober facts*, founded on *rational evidence*, without making use of such feeble auxiliaries as your own ‘*fears, suggestions, and queries*,’ you will not think it strange if we should not become converts to your sentiments. But you continue your suggestion and ask, ‘Is it not supposable, that from the manner in which *some* have treated the subject of baptism, these apostates were first led to suppose it a great attainment in religion, to be plunged all under water? This supposition places the whole of these *apostates* (as you call them) to our account: and that they were led on to this apostasy merely by wrong instructions respecting baptism. But, do you know this certainly to be the case with any one individual? or with any considerable number of them? If not, your supposition must appear in an unfriendly light, and ‘calculated to mislead the ignorant and inattentive.’

You conclude your alarming description, by presenting them to the eye of imagination, as ‘*now sinking* in the quicksands which border on final perdition! *Pandora’s fatal box* could scarce contain more evils than you attribute to baptism by immersion! Enlightened *reason*, however, makes a pause,—and asks, *Can it be so?* Hoary *experience* instantly comes forward, and asserts that the *fact* is known to be otherwise.

O thou condescending Redeemer, is an humble imitation of thy innocent example thus charged with leading the *fatal* way to *infidelity*, and ‘final perdition?’ Hast thou not commanded us to follow thee? and said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments?”

Sir, I have now finished my remarks upon your *Friendly Letter*, and shall only beg leave to add my sincere wishes for your prosperity in the cause of truth; and that you may be honoured as an instrument in bringing many souls to glory. I now cheerfully submit the foregoing observations to the judgment of a candid public. At the same time humbly imploring the Father of mercies so to overrule the present controversy, that truth may be supported, error detected, and the *ordinances* restored to their primitive purity: that we may be agreed, not only so as to hold occasional communion together, but according to the apostle's desire, that we may be *perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*, with respect to the *MODE and ORDER* of gospel institutions; and that *we* *may all speak the same thing*. Then indeed, what the prophet saw in vision shall in a gospel sense be accomplished; *The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.*\* With joy we anticipate the happy day, when in a peculiar sense, *The LORD shall be KING over all the earth: in that day there shall be one LORD, and his name one* † *One faith! One baptism!* ‡ His church, *one body*; and the watchmen, with regard to gospel institutions, *shall see eye to eye*; and *all disputing cease forever*.

While waiting the arrival of that happy period, it shall be my constant prayer,

"If I am *right*, thy grace impart,  
Me in the right to stay;  
If I am *wrong*, O teach my heart  
To find that *better way*."

\* *Nak. xi. 13.*

† *Zech. xiv. 9.*

‡ *Eph. iv. 5.*

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In page 67, second paragraph, instead of the three first lines, read as follows:—*If indeed it be evident from scripture, "That none but such, who are thus visibly, and in the charitable judgment of the church, believers," &c.*

THE  
BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS ONLY,  
AND THE

Particular Communion

OF

*THE BAPTIST CHURCHES,*

EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED.

*IN THREE PARTS.*

THE FIRST—PUBLISHED ORIGINALLY IN 1789;

THE SECOND—IN 1794;

THE THIRD—AN *APPENDIX*, CONTAINING ADDITIONAL  
OBSERVATIONS AND ARGUMENTS, WITH STRICTURES ON  
SEVERAL LATE PUBLICATIONS.

---

BY THOMAS BALDWIN.

---

PART III.

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Boston :

Printed and sold by MANNING & LORING, No. 2, Cornhill.  
1806.

7      *DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, to wit:*

**B**E IT REMEMBERED, That on the tenth day of September, in the thirty-first year of the independence of the United States of America, MANNING & LORING, of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof they claim as Proprietors, in the words following, *to wit*:—"The Baptism of Believers only, and the Particular Communion of the Baptist Churches, explained and vindicated. In Three Parts. The first—published originally in 1789; the second—in 1794; the third—an Appendix, containing Additional Observations and Arguments, with Strictures on several late Publications. By THOMAS BALDWIN."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an Act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, 'An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

WILLIAM S. SHAW, *Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*



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# A P P E N D I X.

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## SECTION I.

IT is with a mixture of regret and pleasure, that the Author of the ensuing work again resumes his pen in this unpleasant controversy. To be obliged to oppose the sentiments and practice of a body of Christians, so respectable for their number, learning, and piety, and for many of whom he entertains cordial sentiments of friendship and Christian affection, is matter of no small regret. But he feels a degree of pleasure in believing, that he is not influenced by an improper partiality for a particular sect, but with a laudable zeal for the honour of Christ, as Lawgiver and King in Zion.

The subject of *particular communion*, has at length become the most important article of dispute, between the Baptists and Pædobaptists. The latter urge their objections with much address, and seem determined if we will not give up this part of our practice, to have no religious connexion with us whatever.

We have attempted, in a very plain, undisguised manner, to assign the true reasons of our conduct. These have been either overlooked, or deemed unsatisfactory. They on the other hand have laboured to convince us, that the whole of our practice wherein we differ from them, is unscriptural, and opposed to the true spirit of the gospel. We have, with all the candour we could command, endeavoured critically to examine and weigh their arguments, but have not been able to see their conclusiveness. Of course we remain unconvinced.

It is a fact well known, that the Baptist churches from time immemorial, have in general held and practised, what is called *close* or *particular communion*. That is, they have refused to communicate at the Lord's table with those whom they deemed unbaptized. When they were few in number, and universally despised, this was little complained of. It was sometimes just mentioned in the close of a long catalogue of errors in this way, "And beside all this, they refuse to commune with us."

We wish not to attribute the unusual and increasing opposition that is made to our sentiments in this particular, to unworthy motives ; but we are at a loss in some instances how to account for it, on the principles of Christian sincerity. Can we suppose, that those who unceasingly scandalize our practice, and endeavour to represent our sentiments in the most unfavourable light, are sincerely desirous of communicating with us at the Lord's table ? We certainly cannot, unless we suppose them as inconsistent as they represent us. For what purpose then, it may be asked, is this *hue and cry* set up about close communion ? It is believed by many, that the true answer would be, because it is known to be the most popular objection which can be urged against our sentiments. Immersion has confessedly so many advantages over sprinkling, and the baptism of a believing adult to that of an unconscious infant ; that little head could be made against a practice which has so much the appearance of being apostolic, were it not for its connexion with the "antichristian" scheme of close communion.

Our Pædobaptist brethren know as well as we, that our particular communion is a natural consequence of our sentiments respecting baptism. It is seen at once, that the former is directly connected with the latter ; yea, that it arises out of it. But instead of approving of it upon this ground, they infer, that our views of baptism must be wrong, or they would not produce such unpleasant consequences. We are satisfied that there is fault somewhere. Either they are to blame for *rejecting the counsel of God in not being baptized* agreeably to

the institution ; or we are, for not acknowledging them to be baptized when we verily believe they are not.

We think, however, we cannot be consistently blamed, for refusing to communicate at the Lord's table with such as we deem unbaptized, especially by such as themselves hold baptism to be a pre-requisite for that ordinance. This we consider to be precisely the ground on which our Pædobaptist brethren stand. We know of none who are esteemed sound in doctrine, and orderly in practice, who do not agree with us, in refusing to communicate with any persons however pious and amiable, until they are baptized.

There are some indeed, to get rid of the difficulty in the easiest way possible, who tell us, (but who never reduce their sentiments to practice) they could commune with those who had never been baptized in any way, provided they had sufficient evidence of their piety. But we conclude the Pædobaptists in general, would join with us, in rejecting a sentiment so subversive of gospel order, and say with the apostle, " We have no such custom, neither the churches of God."

If these observations be just, they will bring us to the true ground of the controversy ; which is, not whether we ought to communicate with unbaptized persons, but whether we ought not to believe that to be gospel baptism which is administered by sprinkling only, and to such subjects as make no profession of their faith ? For notwithstanding they constantly blame us for refusing them communion at the Lord's table, they do it always upon the supposition, that they are baptized as well as we. We have repeatedly declared, that we could not conscientiously believe them to be baptized, according to the requirement of the institution. We think our brethren ought to believe us. Our practice sufficiently demonstrates the sincerity of the declaration. For could we with a good conscience recede from a practice so very obnoxious to other Christians, they certainly must suppose we should wish to do it. Therefore to charge us with holding the sentiment merely from party spirit, or with a view to make a schism in the body of believers, is both ungenerous and unjust. We

solemnly declare, if we know the motives of our conduct, that nothing less than a conscientious regard to what we believe to be the will of God our Saviour manifested in his word, influences our practice in this particular.

If we have been able clearly to comprehend and state the subject of the dispute, and to shew where the difficulty lies ; the next question will be, What can be done to bring the matter to a favourable issue ? We see at present only two ways, in which this can be effected. The first is, for each party to drop the dispute wholly, and to conclude his brother may be a Christian, though in some points he may be erroneous. Each concluding to retain their sentiments entire, until they are convinced by the light of truth that they are wrong. Determining like the Bereans to search the scriptures, and see if these things are so ; and in the mean time to unite in every thing in which they are agreed, in aiding the common cause of our glorious Redeemer.

Should the above be rejected, we conceive the only remaining way will be, for each party to bring their whole strength to the contest, and determine to conquer, or be conquered.

The former of these, is certainly the most pleasant and desirable ; and if it can be thought practicable ought to be pursued. What real objection can there be to a practice which approximates to that *charity which believeth all things, hopeth all things* ? What objection ? a very serious one, says my Pædobaptist brother ! You refuse to admit me to your communion table ; and this you pretend to do, because you say I am not rightly baptized. You therefore evidently “consider me as one of the *antichristian* world.” And by thus treating me, “you place me without, *where are dogs, and forcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*.”\* No, my dear brother, you infer too hastily. We do not consider you as “one of the *antichristian* world,” but as a dear child of God : yet we seriously think you are in an error respecting baptism. We can by no means bring ourselves to believe, that

\* Vid. Mr. Austin's Letters, p. 5, 8.

to be a Christian, and to be baptized, are precisely the same thing. You seem to suppose, that we lay an undue stress upon baptism. But is it not evident that you lay much more ? For the want of it, wholly unchristianizes a person in your view : in ours, it only proves his obedience defective, without impeaching his motives. We suppose that *blindness in part has happened to him*, but do not determine his heart to be prevailingly wicked.

The want of baptism can take no more from a man, than the possession of it could add to him ; for if baptism alone would not make him a Christian, then the want of it cannot wholly unchristianize him. Besides, if you have that charity which *beareth all things*, and which *endureth all things*, will it not enable you to *bear with us a little in this folly*,\* if indeed you esteem it to be such ?

Should we not all act much more in character as Christians, to unite in every point of truth in which we are agreed, rather than to treat each other with such unchristian indifference, merely because we are not agreed in every thing ? No, replies another Pædobaptist brother, all your professions of friendship are of no avail, so long as you “ withhold communion from us, thereby treating us as unchristened heathens, aliens from the church and covenant of God.”† My dear Sir, you do not do us justice. Your inference is the most unfavourable that could be made. We certainly mean no such thing by the practice which you reprehend ; nor can we see that it necessarily implies what you infer. Is there no other possible way in which we can manifest our Christian affection to each other, unless we meet at the same communion table ? If the members of a particular church have no other way of expressing their love to each other, than at periodical seasons to meet together at the Lord’s table, we must conclude they are unacquainted with many of the principal advantages to be derived from the Christian profession.

The scriptures lead us to conceive that this *mystic rite* was designed by our blessed Saviour to represent his

\* 2 Cor. xi. 1.

† Dr. Osgood’s Disc. on Baptism, p. 10.



death, and as an expression of our hope of interest in it ; and so, by consequence, to be *one* token of Christian fellowship. But how many thousands of Christians there are of the same denomination, who have fellowship with each other, but who never did, and perhaps never will, meet together at the same sacramental table.

It is fully believed that a considerable proportion of the two denominations are agreed in the most important articles of the Christian faith. It is hence certainly desirable they should unite their efforts to advance this best of interests, and to oppose the enemies of our common salvation.

Many of our brethren tell us, they have long ardently desired this union among all real Christians :—but ; —but what ? Why we have, say they, one very important objection ; you will not admit us to communion with you. Supposing we cannot conscientiously ; what then ? Why then, we think it best to have no religious connexion with you whatever. Well, if it must be so, it must. But admitting we are in an error in this particular, is it of such a nature as actually to forbid all Christian intercourse with us ? We really believe you to be in an error as it respects both the subjects and the mode of baptism. We are willing to allow you to form the same opinion of us with respect to our terms of communion ; (for it must be remembered that you can readily overlook all the rest of our errors, if we would only consent to free communion) now what decision can it be supposed an impartial judge would pass upon our difference of opinion on these points ? Would he not rationally conclude, that all who are in heart friendly to the Lord Jesus Christ, and who agree in the essential articles of the Christian faith, ought cordially to unite their endeavours to build up the cause of the dear Redeemer ? Here we think we are willing to meet our brethren, and leave every thing of less moment to the light of truth to adjust. Who then are the blameable cause of the present disunion ? Attempts will undoubtedly be made, to lay it at the door of the Baptists : yea, it is already placed to their account. For, says a Rev. Pædobaptist brother, “ Were they equally liberal

and candid, (as we are) *the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace* might be preserved, and all clamour, strife, and division, happily prevented. Upon whom then, does the guilt of these evils lie ?”\* We are unwilling to bear the blame, if we can honourably clear ourselves of it ; and we are determined to make an effort to that purpose.

In meeting our brethren on the ground above stated, we think we meet them fairly. We ask no relinquishment of sentiment on their part. We admit them just as they are. But in proposing to unite with us, they insist upon our giving up an article which is interwoven with every part of our sentiments as Baptists. The impartial will hence judge which party is justly chargeable with the want of candour.

If our brethren are determined on this point, that they will have no religious connexion with us, nor fellowship us as members of the household of faith, unless we give up our particular communion, we think we have a right to expect from them satisfactory proof of one of the two following articles. Namely,

*First.* That baptism is not, by the order of the gospel, required as an indispensable pre-requisite to a visible standing in the church of Christ, and consequently to a participation at the Lord’s table. Or,

*Secondly.* That neither a visible profession of faith, nor an immersion in water, are essential to gospel baptism.

We think we have a right to expect them to furnish proof on one of these points, or cease to blame us for our limited communion. We see no way at present how we can give up the former, or admit the latter, without violating our own consciences. And yet every person of common discernment must see, that we practically admit one or the other, by uniting in free communion with such as we deem unbaptized.

Will our brethren, who charge us with being *contracted* in our views, attempt to prove, that believers in the apostolic age were admitted to communicate together at the Lord’s table, without first submitting to

\* Dr. Osgood’s Disc. p. 11.

baptism, as a prior institution ? We think they will not. An attempt of this kind would have to encounter not only the scripture history, but the universal sentiment and practice of Christians of all denominations, from the commencement of the gospel dispensation, down to the present day : we hence conclude none will undertake it. As the subject in dispute has not, as we recollect, been assumed on this ground, we shall not at present attempt to adduce arguments to oppose it. We shall therefore take it for granted, until some one attempts to prove the contrary, that the two denominations are agreed on this point.

The question in dispute may be reduced then to this single point : Whether those who have only been *sprinkled in infancy*, before they had any knowledge of good or evil, and consequently before they were capable of professing faith in Christ, are to be considered as baptized persons, (and hence duly qualified for communion at the Lord's table) according to the divine institution ? To this question, the Baptists give their decided negative. They have uniformly insisted, that none have a right to the institution, but such as profess to *believe with all the heart*.\* It also appears clear to them, that any application of water, short of an entire immersion, or bathing of the whole body, cannot be considered as gospel baptism. The Pædobaptists take the opposite side of the question, and attempt to prove the right of infants to baptism, not from New Testament authority, but from the *covenant of circumcision* made with Abraham and his seed ; and from the *sameness* of the Jewish and Christian churches. They also attempt to justify sprinkling, or any partial application of water for baptism, principally on the ground that the institution is delivered in such indefinite language, that nothing more can be positively determined, than that water in the name of the sacred Trinity is some how or other to be applied.

From this plain statement, the reader will readily perceive the different ground the parties take, and will

\* Acts viii. 37.

be able, it is hoped, in the sequel, to determine satisfactorily which side has the support of truth.

That we may avail ourselves of all the light which our opponents have to offer in favour of the above sentiments, we shall begin with an examination of their arguments in support of them.

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## SECTION II.

*The Arguments for Infant Membership in the Gospel Church, inferred from the Covenant of Circumcision, considered.*

THE covenant of circumcision is a general topic resorted to by nearly all the advocates for infant baptism. Few have attempted to defend it as having derived its authority entirely from the New Testament. Hence when you ask a Pædobaptist for his warrant for infant baptism, he will at once refer you to the xviith. chapter of Genesis, and repeat a *part* of the covenant of circumcision ; (for it must be observed, that Pædobaptists claim no interest in the greater part of that covenant, any more than the Bâptists do.) Here he will inform you, that God was graciously pleased to make a grant in favour of the infant seed of the Jewish patriarch, and promised that the blessing of Abraham should come on the Gentiles through faith. The same grant, he will tell you, secures to the offspring of every believer the right of admission to the gospel church and its privileges. As if this statement were an unequivocal answer to your inquiry, you may expect him to turn upon you with an air of assurance, and demand of you categorical proof, when and where this *rite of infants was ever vacated* ?

But it must be observed, that this is taking for granted the very point in dispute ; i. e. That infants have a right to gospel baptism, because infants under the law had a right to circumcision. That the male offspring of Abraham, and of his natural seed, and of his

servants and their seed, were proper subjects of the rite of circumcision, no Baptist we believe ever disputed. But, that the partial rite of infants (for it was only such) under the legal dispensation, should, without any renewal of the grant or other intimation, secure for them generally a right to baptism under the gospel dispensation, is an inference that cannot be admitted without proof. This proof is what the Baptists have long asked for, but have never yet been able to obtain. The agreement between these two dispensations will be more particularly considered under the next head.

Our business at present is, to examine the evidence in favour of infant membership in the Christian church, as founded and resting on the covenant of circumcision. Passing over for the present, God's covenant with Abraham, which contained the promise of the Messiah, and the blessing of the Gentile nations in him, we shall proceed immediately to the consideration of this covenant.\*

In the xviith. chapter of Genesis this covenant is recorded at large. The several articles of it may be enumerated and distinguished as follows.

Art. I. *I will make my covenant between me and thee,* AND WILL MULTIPLY THEE EXCEEDINGLY, Gen. xvii. 2.

The promissory part of this article respected the natural offspring of Abraham, and nothing more, as appears by numerous other passages of scripture, as well as the one before us: unless it should be thought that Abraham's natural seed was typical of his spiritual. The promise in this article has been literally and extensively fulfilled.

Art. II. *Behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a FATHER OF MANY NATIONS,* ver. 4, 5.

The fulfilment of this part of the covenant is easily traced in the sacred history. A number of distinct nations did arise from the seed of Abraham, some of which remain to the present day. There is nothing in this article which points us directly to the church of Christ. The utmost that can fairly be made out, will be only a typical reference.

\* As this covenant was called by a New-Testament Martyr the covenant of circumcision, we know of no better name by which to call it.



Art. III. The third particular promised on God's behalf to Abraham, was, not only that he should be the Father of a *numerous*, but of a *royal race*. AND KINGS SHALL COME OF THEE, ver. 6.

This respected not the church of God, as such, under any dispensation ; but the natural offspring of the patriarch. Nor is there any difficulty in tracing the literal fulfilment of this part of the covenant. If we examine the history of Ishmael, Abraham's first-born, or the family of Isaac, the immediate heir of promise, we shall find kings in abundance did spring from Abraham. The account which has come down to us in the sacred pages, respecting these nations and their kings, furnishes incontestable proof, that by far the greatest part were very wicked, and many of them gross idolaters. View them collectively or individually, and you will scarcely be able to trace a typical resemblance of that church, which Jesus Christ set up, under the new dispensation ; much less the church in an organized gospel state.

Art. IV. *I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, FOR AN EVERLASTING COVENANT, TO BE A GOD UNTO THEE AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE. AND I WILL GIVE UNTO THEE AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE, THE LAND WHEREIN THOU ART A STRANGER, ALL THE LAND OF CANAAN, FOR AN EVERLASTING POSSESSION, AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD*, ver. 7, 8.

As this part of the covenant contains the great principle, from whence our Pædobaptist brethren draw their main arguments, we will endeavour to examine every part of it carefully.

Here are two leading ideas in this article. The first is, God's promise *to be a GOD to Abraham and his seed*. The second, *to give them the land of Canaan*. This covenant, taken collectively, is called an *everlasting covenant* ; and the grant of the land of Canaan, an *everlasting possession*. Whatever blessings were included in this covenant, or granted by this possession, all were conveyed by the same tenor. The same words of perpetuity are affixed to each.

That God has long since by his prophet pronounced a *Loanmi* upon that people,\* and by his righteous prov-

\* Hos. i. 9.

idence rejected them from all special visible relation to him, can no more be denied, than that he has suffered them to be driven out, and dispossessed of the land of promise.

We will now proceed to inquire more particularly what was promised in this everlasting covenant.\* The language is, *I will establish my covenant, &c. to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.* The question is, what did God engage by this promise? "Every thing," says one, "that a God of mercy can bestow upon fallen creatures, for time and eternity." Indeed this is a general postulatum, taken by the writers on that side of the controversy. But is it correct? Will they be willing to abide by all the consequences, which will unavoidably follow such a supposition? When God said, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed,* "the promise is as much to the seed, as to Abraham," says a zealous advocate for infant membership.† Very well. But what was engaged in this promise? Was it a promise of absolute saving blessings? If not, we are disputing about nothing.

\* Some persons appear to lay an undue stress upon the word *everlasting*, which is annexed to this covenant, as though it were a peculiar characteristic of it. Whatever ideas we attach to this expression, we certainly ought to explain it correspondent to fact, to the actual state of things.

The word everlasting to us does not appear peculiar as applied in the case before us. It is frequently used with respect to other covenants.† It has a threefold application as connected with this covenant. The first is general. It is called an everlasting covenant. The possession of the promised land, an everlasting possession. The mark left upon the subjects of this bloody rite is thus expressed; *My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.* Our brethren very tenaciously retain the first of these, but have no difficulty in dispensing with the two last. To us they appear so entirely connected, that we are led to consider them all of the same import. Yea, it appears to us that the two latter are exegetical of the former. At least, no part of the covenant can, by fair construction, be carried to a greater extent of time, than the mark of circumcision in the flesh; and the possession of the land of Canaan, both of which are said to be everlasting. Hence we see, that two parts of this covenant called everlasting have come to an end, while in one instance the expression is retained, for the purpose of aiding infant baptism.

† See Lev. xxiv. 8. xiii. 17. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, &c.

‡ Mr. P. Edwards, p. 77.

We shall take the liberty to state a few queries, in order to throw light on the subject.

1st. Did this promise, to be a God to Abraham's seed, respect his natural or spiritual seed? If the former, then the Gentiles cannot be included, for this plain reason, they are not his offspring. If the latter, none but believers can be interested; for no other are the *spiritual seed* of Abraham. In either case it supports no claim in favour of the unbelieving children of the Gentiles.

2d. Was this promise absolute? or was it conditional? If absolute, (and it contained the saving blessings of redemption) will it not prove that all the descendants of Abraham to the latest period of time will be saved? We think this will unavoidably follow. But this proves too much, because it proves against fact, and so destroys itself. If we are to consider this as a conditional promise of salvation, it will oblige us to inquire,

3d. What were the conditions on which its blessings were suspended? Were they any thing short of faith and repentance? If so, it could not be a promise extending to all Abraham's posterity containing eternal life; for none but penitent believers have any such promise made to them. Nor will any others, let them descend from whom they may, ever share in the final blessings of redemption.

4th. Whatever else might be contained in the promise made to Abraham and his seed in this covenant, if it did not contain an absolute promise of eternal life, it is urged against us in this controversy to no purpose; and must in that case be acknowledged to be essentially different from what God has promised to believers. God's promises respecting his believing people are absolute. They are not yea and nay; *but yea and amen to the glory of God by us.* *He that heareth my words, said Jesus, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall* NEVER COME INTO CONDEMNATION.\*

5th. If all Abraham's descendants, through every period of time, are not saved with a complete and everlasting salvation; will it not prove beyond a reasonable doubt, that God promised no such thing, in his engage-

\* John v. 24.

ment, to be a God to Abraham and his seed? We think that none, unless they are Universalists, will have the madness to say, that all the natural offspring of Abraham have been, or will be saved. Nor will any impiously dare to charge God with a violation of his promise.

6th. If it should be said, that God did not engage absolutely to save all Abraham's posterity, including the son of the bond-woman, the six sons of Keturah and their descendants; Esau, Achan, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with all that unbelieving race, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness; but that he only engaged to save such as trusted in, and obeyed him; this would be a complete abandonment of the argument; for it would place such as claim interest in the covenant of circumcision exactly upon a level with all others. God has engaged to save all others who reverence, worship, and obey him; *though Abraham be ignorant of them, and Israel acknowledge them not.\** We have no difficulty in believing, that all who are truly pious, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, baptized or unbaptized, will be saved.

7th. We must be allowed to query once more. If God has not promised salvation absolutely to the seed of Abraham generally, including all the unbelievers of that nation; can the promise be supposed to make any better provision for the unbelieving seed of Gentile believers? It certainly cannot. For if God spared not the natural branches *because of unbelief*, it can hardly be supposed that Gentile unbelievers, whether young or old, can have any real interest in, or union to, the TRUE VINE.

If the reader can keep in mind the above queries, and can without prejudice allow them their proper weight, he will want much more than mere assertion to satisfy him, that the infant seed of believers have a right to membership in the gospel church, in consequence of the promise made to Abraham and his seed in the covenant of circumcision.

\* Isa. lxiii. 16.



Could we believe with our brethren, that the above promise made to Abraham and his seed, has descended in the fullest extent to Gentile believers and their seed, the preceding queries would present the same difficulties in this application of it, as in the former. It would in this case be extremely natural to ask, What has God promised to the children of Pædobaptist believers, more than to the children of other believers? Has he promised salvation to any while impenitent, on the account of the piety of their parents? or merely because they have been baptized? It must be answered in the negative.

From these different views of the subject, the argument seems to be verging to a point; and this will be the only just conclusion, *He that believeth, and is baptized, whether descended from believing, or infidel parents, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, however pious his ancestors, shall be damned. The same Lord over all, is rich unto all who call upon him: for there is no respect of persons with God.*

In attempting to accommodate this covenant with its distinguishing institute, to the state of the Gentile church under the gospel economy, we meet with difficulties at every stage. We are obliged to pass through a long train of analogical and inferential reasonings, which few persons are competent to, in order to find a plain gospel institution, equally designed for men and women of all nations and capacities! But for what is all this labour? Is it not to support a tradition which has no foundation in the word of God, nor in any authentic history of the primitive apostolic church? Does it not appear much more natural and safe to go forth by the *footsteps of the flock*; following our good SHEPHERD in his own example; remembering, that *when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them?*

We think it has been made sufficiently plain in the preceding remarks, that if the covenant promise to Abraham's seed respected his natural seed, none of the Gentiles can be interested in it. If it respected his spiritual seed, none but believers can be interested; for no others, in the language of the New Testament, are



considered as the children of Abraham. Hence we see nothing to support the claim of infants, to membership in the gospel church.

But should we admit the premises laid down by our Pædobaptist brethren, will they consent to abide the fair legitimate consequences of their own arguments? We very much doubt it.

Their statement, if we understand them, is this; 'That believers and their offspring under the present dispensation, stand in the same covenant relation to God, as Abraham, and his offspring did, under the former. And that they are under the same obligation to baptize their children, that Abraham and his posterity were to circumcise theirs. Let us now bring the matter to trial.

By what authority did Abraham presume to circumcise the males of his house? By the undoubted authority of God. Here it follows; *And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you; every man-child in your generations; he that is bought with thy money of any stranger that is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an EVERLASTING COVENANT.\**

Here we see, that Abraham was obliged to circumcise all the males of his house, whether old or young, without the least regard to their moral qualifications. No previous declaration of faith and repentance was required, either in adults or infants. If this be indeed "the great charter of all our privileges," and the very law on which household baptism depends; we ask, and ask seriously, ought not our brethren to practise according to it in its full extent, if they would be consistent? The patriarch not only believed, but obeyed.

In the selfsame day was *Abraham circumcised, and Ish-*

*mael his son, and all the men of his house, born in his house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.\** Do Pædobaptists administer baptism to the same extent as Abraham did circumcision? Is it usual with them to baptize not only the children of a family, but all the domestics, upon the faith of the master, or head of the family?

The argument by which the right of infants is supported is this, "a precept once in force, and not limited to any certain period, is ever after to be considered in force, unless known to have been repealed by the same authority by which it was given."† We ask, and hope we shall have a fair and candid answer, if such an one can be given, When, and where has the right of servants as distinguished from that of children been repealed? If the right of children to membership rests on this covenant, is not the right of servants completely secured by the same? This we are equally bound to believe as the former, until it can be shown to the contrary.

How many men-servants Abraham had at the time circumcision was instituted, we know not; but some time before he had three hundred. Probably as many, or more at this time. All, were they more or less, were circumcised. But would it not be a very novel sight to see one of our southern planters baptized, and all the slaves on his plantation in the same day. If they were all true Christians, it would be a blessed sight indeed; but not otherwise.

This argument will probably be very unpleasant to our opponents, but we appeal to them, and to a candid public, whether it is not correct, and whether it can be fairly evaded? If the covenant of circumcision will, by fair construction, support the right of infants to membership in the gospel church, we verily believe, and we must contend, that the right of servants can be supported by it to the same extent.

2. A second consequence arising from the premises laid down by our brethren is, that infants, if admitted to baptism, have an undoubted right to all the other priv-

\* Gen. xvii. 26, 27.

† Mr. S. Worcester's Disc. p. 56.

ileges of the gospel church. It is conceived that no reason can be assigned, why a person who is qualified for one ordinance, is not equally qualified for another. No distinction has been made under any dispensation. Circumcision was the principal qualifying pre-requisite for communion in the paschal feast, and for all the privileges of complete membership in the Jewish church. Under the gospel dispensation, *They that gladly received the word were baptized*; added to the church, and then united in breaking bread. Do Pædobaptists admit all such as they baptize in their infancy, to a participation in all the privileges of the Christian church? It is well known they do not: and yet consistency most plainly requires it.

That we reason fairly, and agreeably to the views of Pædobaptists themselves, the following quotations will abundantly show. "Circumcision," says a late writer, "was formerly the appointed pre-requisite of *admission to the church of God*; baptism is now the appointed pre-requisite of admission to the same church. In a word, baptism is of the same import, and of the same use in the church under the present dispensation, as was circumcision under the ancient."\* Says another, "by this significant rite (circumcision) they were dedicated to God, and *distinguished from the rest of the world, as his church and people*."† According to these gentlemen, and we believe they are correct in this, baptism is the appointed medium of introduction into the Christian church. (It is hoped that the reader will remember this, as we shall probably have occasion to make some further use of it by and by.) But how glaringly inconsistent must their conduct appear when compared with their reasonings!

In order to carry a point against the Baptists, they insist upon it that their baptized infants are church members. But their practice tells every body, that they believe no such thing. We appeal to common observation. Do they constantly bring their children to the communion table? Do they maintain any church discipline over them? Are they permitted to

\* Mr. S. Worcester's Disc. p. 52, 54.

† Dr. Osgood.

vote and act in church matters ? Are there any instances in which the profane and licentious have been the subjects of church censure ? A silent negative must be given to all these questions. From the general conduct of the churches that hold infant baptism, a candid mind would naturally suppose, that the membership of infants, if it ever existed, ceased as soon as they were baptized.

Another circumstance which serves to corroborate our last observation is, that they admit all whom they treat as church members, in a manner similar to what we do. Hence we are frequently told, on such a day a number of persons were received into the Rev. Mr.——'s church, and at another time twenty more were added, and so on. If our Pædobaptist brethren seriously believe what they endeavour to make us believe, that all their baptized children were, by that act, admitted to visible membership in the church, we can hardly see the propriety of their being admitted a second time ; unless by some misconduct of their own, they had lost their standing, like the man in the church at Corinth, whom the apostle exhorted them again to receive, when he became repentant.

What conclusion would any candid person put upon the conduct of a Pædobaptist church, on seeing them receive by their usual solemnity, a number of persons into visible fellowship with them ? Would not the conviction be irresistible, that they had never before been considered as church members ? Indeed, for any to have observed the conduct of these persons, and of the church towards them, during the whole intervening period from their baptism in infancy, to their making this engagement ; would it be possible to draw the conclusion, that any relation had subsisted between them, which had had the least influence on the conduct of either ? Is it not perfectly astonishing, that men of learning and of piety, and who claim the privilege of being thought consistent, should not see as well as others, that their sentiments and practice are totally at variance with each other ? As much as they find fault with our particular communion, they have never yet been able



to prove it inconsistent with our sentiments respecting baptism. Indeed many Pædobaptists have acknowledged, that they thought us entirely consistent in this particular.

3. We proceed to notice a third consequence from the position laid down by our brethren, i. e. That if baptized persons stand in the same relation to the church under the present dispensation, as circumcised persons did under the former ; they are equally obliged by the same penalties, to attend the subsequent duties of the gospel church, as the others were those of the Jewish.

Our meaning will be fully illustrated by carefully attending to the ordinance of the passover. The law concerning it is in the following words ; *And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover ; There shall no stranger eat thereof, but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof : All the congregation of Israel shall keep it ; and when any stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it.\**

Every circumcised person, who was not prevented by ceremonial uncleanness, or by being absent, was not only permitted, but obliged to keep the passover, on pain of being cut off from his people : for thus it is written ; *But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even that same soul shall be cut off from his people.†*

Do our brethren consider all their baptized children and servants under the same obligation ? If so, ought not ministers to urge the duty, and heads of families and members of churches, to see it carried into effect ; and if any were stubborn, to cut them off by an act of exclusion ? This would indeed establish infant communion to all intents and purposes ; but what of that ? Can there be an instance produced, from the history of the Jewish church, where a state of nonage or minority has been mentioned as a disqualifying circumstance for communion in the paschal feast ? We do not recollect any.

\* Exod xii. 43, 44, 47, 48.

† Numb. ix. 13.



The law of the passover makes no distinction between infants and adults. To be circumcised, and to be free from ceremonial uncleanness, were the only conditions required.

Should any reply, that the Lord's supper is a holy ordinance ; and requires, in every recipient, faith to discern the Lord's body, we readily grant it ; but must be allowed to ask, is not baptism a holy ordinance likewise ? If so, is not a person who is qualified for one, fit for the other ? Do the scriptures require different qualifications for the two ordinances ? The arguments which are employed in behalf of infants, in order to evade the scriptural requirements of *faith* and *repentance*, by Mr. Edwards, will equally serve their turn with regard to the Lord's supper. If what is said of *believing* and *repenting* in order to baptism, applies only to adults ; the same may be said with regard to the sacramental supper.

To show that we reason fairly, we will take one of his arguments, and only by placing the Lord's supper in the room of baptism, it will stand thus, " Are infants proper subjects of the *Lord's supper*, or are they not ? It will clearly follow, that all those places which relate to believers can prove nothing ; the reason is, they have no relation to the question." If you please, take another statement from the same writer. " They (i. e. the Baptists) say the scriptures require faith and repentance in order to baptism. I ask, says he, of whom ? the answer must be, of adults ; for the scriptures never require them of infants in order to *any thing*."\* Very well, Mr. Edwards ; you will have no great difficulty in this way, in getting them to the communion table. The want of *faith to discern the Lord's body*, can no more be urged against the claim of infants to this institution, than the want of *faith and repentance* can be urged against their baptism. The same arguments which would prove their right to one institution, would equally support their claim to the other. The words of Christ, *Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not*, may be applied with quite as much propriety to

\* Mr. Edwards, p. 2, 3, 41.

this institution as to baptism, and might be addressed with as much pathos to the tender feelings of a parent. Let Mr. Edwards, or any other man, disprove the right of infants to the communion table, and we pledge ourselves by the same arguments to disprove their right to baptism.

To give additional force to the preceding observations, let it be remembered, that *infant baptism*, and *infant communion*, make their appearance in ecclesiastical history nearly together.

The Rev. Mr. James Pierce, of Exon, about eighty years ago, volunteered his service in the cause of *infant communion*, as Dr. Osgood has lately done in favour of their baptism. Mr. Pierce has sustained the right of infants to the eucharist on the same ground, and defended it by the same arguments, as modern Pædobaptists do their right to baptism. It will be difficult to shew wherein his arguments fail of being equally as conclusive as theirs.

Should it be said that there is no mention made in the New Testament of infant communion, the same may be said of infant baptism. It will be equally in vain to urge their incapacity to understand, or to derive spiritual advantage from this solemn rite ; the same may be objected to their baptism. That the eucharist was given to some who were called infants, towards the close of the third century, we have the authority of Dr. Mosheim.\* It is not certain, however, that these *infants* were *babes*. It appears to have been a custom at this time to call all minors infants. It is evident beyond a doubt, that the *infants* whose baptism Tertulian opposed, were not *babes*, but probably children of seven or eight years old. Such as were capable of "asking to be baptized," but such as, in his judgment, were not sufficiently enlightened and established in the doctrine of Christ. His words are thus rendered ; "The condescension of God may confer his favours as he pleases ; but our wishes may mislead ourselves and others. It is therefore most expedient to defer baptism, and to regulate the administration of it, according

\* Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. p. 283.

to the disposition, and the age of the persons to be baptized : (*præcipue tamen circa parvulos*) and especially in the case of little ones."\* The general tenor of his reasoning obliges us to understand him in this light. This will appear less singular when we consider that he had been in the practice of the law, before he became a teacher of religion. That minors are frequently called infants in law, will appear by a quotation from judge Blackstone : " Infancy, " says he, " is nonage, which is a defect of the understanding. Infants under the age of discretion ought not to be punished by any criminal prosecution whatever. What the age of discretion is, in various nations, is matter of some variety."†

It matters not, however, in the present argument, whether these infants were mere *babes*, or children who were old enough to ask for baptism. It is evident that infant communion commenced nearly if not exactly at the same time that infant baptism did. Dr. Wall makes this acknowledgment, when speaking of giving the communion to infants. " Very near half the Christians in the world do still continue that practice. The Greek church, the Armenians, the Maronites, the Cophiti, the Abassins, the Muscovites, &c. ;—and so, for aught I know, do all the rest of the eastern Christians."‡ The Doctor further acknowledges, that this custom prevailed in St. Austin's time, who commenced his ministry in the year 391, (about as early as we have any authentic account of infant baptism)—That it continued in the western church for six hundred years—" That the Roman church, about the year one thousand, entertaining the doctrine of transubstantiation, let fall the custom of giving the holy elements to infants ; and the other western churches, mostly following their example, did the like upon the same account. But that the Greeks, not having the said doctrine, continued, and do still continue, the custom of communicating infants."§

\* *Parvulus*, the word used by Tertullian, is of vague signification. It is not necessarily, and in this case can by no means be, confined to an infant.

† Comment. Book iv. Chap. ii.

‡ Hist. of infant baptism, p. 517.

§ Ibid.

As the preceding quotations refer us back to Austin,\* we think it best to give our readers his sentiments upon the subject in his own words. It appears that from a mistaken view of those words of Christ, John iii. 5. *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; he, with many others, inferred the necessity of baptizing infants in order to their salvation. The same erroneous construction of John vi. 53. *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*; led him with much zeal to plead for the admission of infants to the Lord's table. With regard to the latter, his words are, "Let us hear the Lord, I say, not indeed speaking this of the holy laver, but of the sacrament of the holy table, (whither NONE RIGHTLY COME UNLESS BAPTIZED) *Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye shall have no life in you.* What do you seek for further? What can be said in answer to this, unless one would set himself against clear and invincible truth? Will any one dare to say this, that this passage does not belong to infants; and that they can have life in themselves without partaking of his body and blood?" And the necessity of this, as well as of baptism to eternal life, he says, the *African* Christians took to be an ancient and apostolic tradition.† They did not pretend that either of them were in the Bible.

It will be asked, How came infant communion to be laid aside, after its having travelled hand in hand with infant baptism for so many centuries? The reason assigned by Dr. Wall is, the admission of that ghostly doctrine of *transubstantiation*. We are at a loss how this should affect it; unless by this supposed change of the elements, they thought them too holy to be trifled with in this way.

That these little Christians, who had not yet been *drawn from the breast, nor learnt doctrine*, might not refuse the elements when offered, the following rule was established; "Care," say they, "is to be taken concerning infants, that they should not without the utmost ne-

\* Augustine, but as often called Austin.

† Ep. 106. Bonifacio, contr. Pelag.

cessity receive any *food* or *suck* after they are baptized, before they communicate in the sacrament of our Lord's body."\*

It will require much ingenuity to maintain the right of infants to membership in the gospel church on the footing of circumcision, and not admit all the consequences above stated. For ourselves, we see no way to embrace one, without admitting the other : and to admit either, appears to us to be subversive of the great design of the gospel, which was to form a church, distinct from the world. But if infant baptism brings them into the church, it totally destroys that distinction, and blends the world and church together. This idea will be more particularly considered in its proper place.

As our Pædobaptist brethren lay so much stress upon this part of the subject, we must be allowed to view it on all sides.

Could we be brought with them to consider the infant offspring of Gentile believers, as standing in the same covenant relation to God as the natural seed of Abraham did, yet still we see nothing, either in the old or new law, which would authorize their baptism. An article every way so different as baptism is from circumcision, seems not to be sufficiently supported by mere inference, but needs the firm basis of plain positive institution to rest upon. To infer the right of infants to baptism from the covenant of circumcision, appears to us extremely forced and unnatural. Some of the difficulties that an inference of this kind labours under, are the following :

1. The law of circumcision was a positive law, not at all dependent on the nature and fitness of things : hence every thing which related to the institute, depended on the express declaration of the institutor. This is precisely the case with baptism ; therefore there can be no arguing from one to the other.

2. The institution of circumcision was expressly limited to males. Females, though descending from the same parents, were not subjects of the *token* of that cov-

\* Ordo Romanus, Tit. de Bapt in Pierre.



enant : but the baptismal institution includes both men and women.

3. The law of circumcision required no previous profession of faith and repentance, neither in adults nor infants, as a qualification for that institution : but the gospel positively requires such a profession in order to baptism, without even an exception in favour of infants.

4. A male slave bought with money of an age above eight days, whether a believer or an infidel, whether an idolater or an atheist, had the same right to circumcision as the infant seed of his master had. The gospel institution makes no provision for slaves until they are *made free by the Son* ; and then it requires, as a pre-requisite to baptism, the same public profession of them as of their believing masters.

5. The rite itself is so very unlike the gospel institute, that it appears extremely unnatural to infer one from the other. Circumcision was a painful bloody rite, performed by cutting the flesh of a particular part, (which delicacy forbids us to name.) Baptism is an immersion, or washing of the whole body in pure water.

6. Circumcision might be lawfully administered by any person, at least by any head of a family, whether male or female.\* Baptism is to be administered by particular officers in the Christian church, called and qualified for the work.

Other dissimilarities might be urged, but these are thought sufficient to shew, that it is not the easiest thing in the world to infer baptism from circumcision. It certainly requires a large stock of mystical jesuitical ingenuity, to make an inference appear plausible, where the nature, act, and design are so different. If infants are to be baptized, there can be no doubt but the institution makes ample provision for them, without subjecting us to the perplexity of tracing it out from an antiquated Jewish rite.

Pædobaptists, when they reason with one another, and are not suspicious that the Baptists are watching to

\* Zipporah circumcised the two sons of Moses with a sharp stone. Midwives have frequently administered baptism, that is, sprinkling, to dying infants. Vid. Robinson's Hist. of Bap.

take advantage of their concessions, reason just as we do. This remark will be established by a quotation from Dr. Emmons's Dissertation on the qualifications for the Christian sacraments, &c. against Dr. Hemmenway. We think the whole work worthy a candid perusal, but can only select a part of one of his arguments. "Dr. Hemmenway," says he, "has followed other writers in arguing from the former dispensations of the covenant of grace, to the present, and endeavouring to prove what the peculiar duties of believers are, under the present dispensation of the covenant of grace, from what they were under its former dispensations. But this mode of reasoning is by no means conclusive. It was the duty of believers under former dispensations of the covenant of grace, to offer sacrifices; but can we hence infer that it is their duty now? It was the duty of believers under former dispensations of the covenant of grace, to circumcise their children and attend the passover; but does it hence follow that those duties are still binding? Or can we justly conclude, that it is the duty of believers now to circumcise their children, or even to baptize them, because it *was* once their duty to circumcise them? The truth is, we must learn the peculiar duties of believers under the present dispensation of the covenant of grace, from the dispensation itself, which ENJOINS ALL THE PECULIAR DUTIES WHICH BELONG TO IT. If believers are to baptize their children, as they undoubtedly are, it is not because they were once obliged to circumcise them." "The Christian dispensation, which is allowed to be the freest from types and figures, plainly speaks for itself. And we ought to look into the clear dispensation of the gospel, in order to discover the peculiar duties of believers, at the present day."\* Would it not be a high reflection upon Dr. Emmons's consistency, to suppose, after such an explicit, candid, and rational statement, he would ever attempt to prove infant baptism from the covenant of circumcision, or from any thing else but the New Testament? Whether he has, or has not, we leave those who are acquainted with his writings to determine. One

\* Diff. chap. ii. sect. v.

thing, however, we must be permitted to say, We verily believe that could the Doctor, with an unprejudiced mind, admit the fair conclusion which must arise from his own reasoning, it would inevitably bring him to *believers' baptism*, or leave him in complete inconsistency !

Having carefully examined every article in the covenant of circumcision, and traced some of the consequences which must follow on admitting its application to the present state of the Christian church, we think it is demonstrably plain, that its first and immediate promises and requirements respected the posterity of Abraham ; that it has at most, only a typical reference to the gospel Gentile church ; and that even this typical relation, like all other types, ought to be applied with great caution and circumspection. It is worthy of observation, that types and the things that are represented by them, although there is some likeness, are always distinct.

The promises which were made to Abraham, respecting the Gentiles, that *in him*, and in *his seed*, all the nations or families of the earth should be blessed, were neither expressed nor included in the covenant of circumcision ; but were entirely distinct, and independent of it. It ought never to be forgotten by all who attend to this controversy, that the great promise which God made to Abraham, and which is so much contended for, was made twenty-four years before the covenant of circumcision ;\* and was renewed about twenty years after ;† but not mentioned in the whole of that transaction. The promise to Abraham, that in him *all the families of the earth should be blessed*, was predicated, we humbly conceive, on the covenant of redemption, *confirmed before of God in Christ* ;‡ and was ratified by the solemnity of an oath, which would have carried it into complete effect, had the covenant of circumcision never existed. The further illustration and proof of what we have now asserted, will be reserved for another part of this work.

\* Gen. xii. 3.    † xxii. 18.    ‡ Gal. iii. 17.

## SECTION III.

*Whether the Jewish and Christian Churches are the same.  
Or whether the latter is a distinct Church, or a mere continuation of the former, considered.*

THE entire silence of the New Testament with respect to the baptism of babes, has led its advocates to trace its origin back to the covenant of circumcision. Their arguments implicitly tell us, that they do not wish to hazard its defence upon the footing of its being an institution of the gospel; but choose rather to consider it as a right established and secured to infants, under the former dispensation. That the male infants of the Jews were circumcised, conformably to the covenant which God made with Abraham their ancestor, recorded in the xviith chapter of Genesis, no one can dispute who reads the writings of Moses. Were it equally plain from the writings of the evangelists and apostles, that infants were baptized, the dispute would be at an end. But of the latter, no proof can be found! Who then can wonder, that the friends of infant membership should not be willing to "let go a certainty, for an uncertainty."

But in order to support the foregoing hypothesis, the gospel church also must be *judaized*; that is, it must be completely incorporated with the old Jewish church, or infant baptism, after all, must languish for want of divine institution to support it. Whether such an attempt does not resemble the conduct of those judaizing teachers, whom St. Paul in his epistles to the Galatians, Philippians, and others so severely reprehended, ought seriously to be considered. To some it has this aspect. Circumcision was the theme on which they perpetually dwelt. *And certain men, says the historian, which came down from Judea, (to Antioch) taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. Also, there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to cir-*

*circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.\**

That our Pædobaptist brethren consider the gospel church only as the Jewish church continued, and not as commencing under the ministry of Jesus Christ, or his immediate forerunner, is clear from all their writings. That it may be seen that we state the subject fairly, we subjoin the following quotations. Mr. *P. Edwards* : "The first Gentiles, of whose calling we read, are said to have been added to the church ; but there was no church existing to which they could be added but the *ancient Jewish church*, of which all the apostles and disciples of our Lord were members."† Mr. *S. Worcester* : "Though a new and brighter dispensation was introduced, yet *the church continued the same*, which had almost two thousand years before been established by the covenant made with Abraham and his seed." "Circumcision was formerly the appointed pre-requisite of admission to the *church of God*, baptism is now the appointed pre-requisite of admission to the same *church*."‡ These gentlemen are quoted as a specimen of the common manner in which they state the subject, rather than to prove a point which it is presumed no one will deny.

We will now proceed to compare these two churches, and shew some of the points in which they disagree.

1. *They differ essentially in their constitutions.*

By the constitution of the Jewish church, we may understand those primary laws by which they were united and distinguished as an ecclesiastical body. These laws contain a declaration of the rights and privileges, the duties and obligations of all the members ; and also the qualifications which constitute the right of membership. Circumcision holds the first and most important place in this system. This formed the discriminating line between the members of this church and all others. It was the initiating badge of membership ; for no male of the seed of Abraham, nor any others,

\* Acts xv. 1, 5.

† Candid Reasons, &c. p. 54.

‡ Two Disc. p. 48, 53, 54.



could be admitted to the privileges of that church without it.

The question now to be determined, is, whether the qualifications for this rite were precisely the same, or even the same in substance, as those required in order to membership in the gospel church? Abraham was the first that administered circumcision under the former dispensation. John, the *forerunner* of Christ, was the first who administered baptism under the new dispensation. Abraham circumcised Ishmael, and all the men of his house, in the self-same day. Ishmael was at the time thirteen years old. This is an age susceptible of religious instruction, and when its influence on the moral temper can be satisfactorily ascertained. Nothing appears in the whole account to justify an opinion, that Ishmael was now a penitent (whatever he might be afterwards) and from that conduct, which led to his expulsion from Abraham's family, we have much reason to believe the contrary.\* Nor is there any more evidence that the men of Abraham's house were penitents, than that Ishmael was. Neither can we find any evidence, that the institution required it in order to qualify them for circumcision. On this subject, so necessary to support the position, that the Jewish and the Christian churches are the same, the scriptures preserve a profound silence! To qualify a person completely for circumcision, nothing more was required, either in adults or infants, than that they were descendants from Abraham, or were Jewish property, having been bought with money. Can any man with the Bible in his hand conscientiously say, that he verily believes these qualifications the same which were required in order to baptism either by John the Baptist, by Jesus Christ, or by the apostles?

As if expressly designed to convince us of this difference in the outset, the harbinger of our Saviour who was sent to introduce his new dispensation, and to manifest him to Israel as the *Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world*, has made the very distinction for which we plead. *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees*

\* Gen. xxi. 9.

*come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, we have ABRAHAM TO OUR FATHER: for I say unto you, God is able of these stones, to raise up children unto Abraham.\** Who were these Pharisees and Sadducees? Were they heathens? No; they were members of the Jewish church, and in full communion, for aught that appears to the contrary. *We have Abraham to our father.* This was the very ground on which their membership in that church rested, and which had never before been disputed. But John demanded qualifications of a much higher nature, and every way different in a moral view, from those which had before been allowed. In the true spirit of a gospel teacher, he required the genuine fruits of repentance. And those who did not bring forth these fruits, and submit to this new institution, Christ himself has denounced, as *rejecting the COUNSEL OF GOD against themselves, in not being baptized of him †*

The different qualifications required by the initiating institutes of the two churches, clearly designate the different character of the members. To constitute a person a complete member of the Jewish church, required nothing more than to be bought with Jewish money, or born of Jewish parents, and to be circumcised. To constitute a person a proper member of the gospel church, he must indeed be *bought with a price! but not with silver and gold, and such corruptible things, but with the precious blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb without blemish!* And whether born of Jewish parents or others, is of no consequence; he *must be born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ‡* He must be *born of water and of the Spirit*, or he can never be considered as duly qualified to *enter the gospel kingdom*, or church. This plain statement inevitably brings the mind to this conclusion; That unless to be bought with money to be a *Jewish servant*, and to be bought with the precious blood of Christ to be *his free men*, are precisely the same things; and to be born of

\* Matt. iii. 7—9.

† Luke vii. 30.

‡ John i. 13, &amp;c.

Jewish parents, according to the flesh, and to be *born of God* by the operations of the Holy Spirit, have the same meaning ; then the moral character of the members, as required by the two institutes, must be acknowledged to be totally different.

We do not think ourselves bound to prove, that there is no similitude, no points of agreement between the two churches ; it is sufficient to our purpose to show, that they differ so essentially that they cannot be considered as one and the same. To show the difference between two men, it would not be necessary to prove, that one walked on two legs, and the other upon four : although they might bear a considerable resemblance to each other, yet there would be visible points of difference, sufficient to show that they were not one.

2. Our second argument is taken from the actual difference in the visible form of the two churches. The Jewish church, in every stage of it, has been national. The gospel church is selected and particular. The former in its constitution had a direct tendency to form and establish a mixed church ; to blend believers and unbelievers, saints and sinners, the virtuous and vicious together in one general communion ; without containing in itself the means of separating the morally clean from the unclean.

The plan of the gospel church is totally different. This is composed of none but professing believers. A people *chosen*, and *called out* from the world. Not distinguished indeed by family descent, or any *mark in the flesh* ; but by having the truth *engraved upon their hearts by the Spirit of the living God*, by which means they become *living epistles, known and read of all men*.

Mr. Edwards has denied that the Jewish church was national during the first three or four centuries from its commencement. But what reason does he assign for it ? Why because “ it had no levitical priesthood, no institution of tythes, &c.” (p. 104.) The reader will remember that we are not disputing about the institution of the priesthood nor tythes, but about membership. If the Jewish nation did not commence its existence in the family of Abraham as really as the Jewish

church, we acknowledge our argument will be weakened; but if it did, it will not be in the power of sophistry to overthrow it.

During the above period, this nation and church were both in their infancy, and both progressed in the same ratio. The question then does not depend on the numbers which composed either the nation, or church, but whether the one was co-existent and co-extensive with the other? Can this be denied in any state of that nation? Does not the bible establish the fact in the clearest manner? To suppose that this church was not national merely because it had no "instituted priesthood or tythes," would be equally as absurd as to suppose, that the nation did not exist, until it existed in its kingly form in the days of Saul. In fact, if the Jewish church did not exist in its national form until the days of Moses, it did not exist in any regular visible form whatever. View it in every possible light, from the establishment of circumcision, until the gospel church succeeded it, and you will find that it comprised the whole body of the Hebrew or Jewish nation. We know of nothing which can denominate a church as being national; but its comprising the nation at large, and its religious rites enforced by national authority. Such we understand the Jewish to have been.

To determine whether the gospel church does not essentially differ in its visible form from the preceding, we shall consult only the New Testament. It matters not to us what forms have been established at Rome or Constantinople, at Geneva or in Great Britain. The New Testament alone must determine us in our present inquiries. Here nothing can be found which looks like a national church. The gospel, though first sent to the Jews, was far from being generally received. *Christ came unto his own; i. e. to his own nation, and his own received him not: but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name.* Of these Jewish believers the gospel church was composed; and to these the converts from among the Gentiles were added. The great body of the Jewish church, notwithstanding the gospel was preached

among them attended with miracles, adhered to their old national religion, and persecuted Jesus of Nazareth as an impostor. In this particular, I am happy enough for once to agree with Mr. Edwards : speaking of this people he says, "As to their character, it is certain that, a few only excepted, they were upon the whole, the DEADLY ENEMIES of Christ and his doctrine." (p. 62.)

It has never yet been proved, nor do we believe it can be fairly inferred, from any thing recorded in the New Testament, that ever a single person was considered as a member of the Christian church, who did not profess faith in Jesus Christ. The account given us in the second chapter of Acts is plain, and easy to be understood. The gospel was faithfully preached by Peter ; the consciences of his hearers were solemnly addressed ; the Holy Ghost accompanied the word in such a manner, that it is said, *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized ; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* No more were baptized, nor were any added to the church but such as gladly received the word. A careful attention to the remaining part of this chapter will convince any one, that these persons were in general real-believers. The account closes with these remarkable words ; *And the Lord added to the church daily, SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED.* From this last remark there is abundant evidence, that in a judgment of charity, they were true believers. Probably a large proportion of the three thousands were heads of families ; yet there is no mention made of their children or servants being baptized, according to the right of membership for which our brethren plead.

The particular mode of address adopted by St. Paul to the several churches to which he wrote, naturally leads to the conclusion, that they were composed only of visible saints, or such as professed to believe in, and love Christ. His language is, *To all that be in Rome, BELOVED OF GOD, CALLED TO BE SAINTS, grace to you, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST JESUS, CALLED TO BE*



SAINTS.\* The addressees in the other epistles are very similar.

Can any man in his sober-senses say, that he verily believes that these churches were made up of all descriptions of character, like the old Jewish church? We very much doubt it. The conviction must be irresistible that they were composed of none but *professed saints*. We speak with this caution, because that human discernment is not always sufficient to detect hypocrisy. Those who take the greatest *heed how they build*, may at times be deceived, as Philip was with Simon. He appeared no doubt to the evangelist to be savingly wrought upon; but afterwards manifested, that he *had neither lot nor part in the matter*. This is after all a very different thing from admitting persons without any profession, and of whom charity itself cannot gather a hope, that they ever knew any thing experimentally about religion.

The true gospel church has never been national since its commencement, and probably never will be until the Millenium, whatever it may then.

It is thought probable that there is as large a proportion of true Christians in these United States, as there has ever been in any nation including the same number of inhabitants, since the Christian era. But is there a serious person of any denomination in this land who would dare to say, that in his opinion this whole nation was, according to the rules exhibited in the New Testament, properly qualified for membership in the Christian church? We presume the contrary. The general practice of all the churches (however lax their discipline may be) goes to establish our sentiment.

That the Jewish and Christian churches are not the same, may be argued, *thirdly*, from several passages of scripture which represent the gospel church as commencing at a different period, as well as existing in a different form from the ancient church.

In explaining the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, Daniel foretold, that four great monarchies should succeed each other, and that the last

should be divided into ten kingdoms, &c. *In the days of these kings, saith he, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.\**

“This description, saith Bishop Newton, can with propriety only be understood, as the ancients understood it, of the kingdom of Christ. *And in the days of these kings, that is, in the days of some of them. And it must be during the days of the last of them; because they are reckoned four in succession, and consequently this must be the fifth kingdom. Accordingly the kingdom of Christ was set up during the days of the last of these kingdoms, that is, the Roman. The stone was totally a different thing from the image, and the kingdom of Christ is totally different from the kingdoms of this world. The stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, as our heavenly body is said to be a building of God, an house not made with hands, that is, spiritual, as the phrase is used in other places. This the fathers generally apply to Christ himself, who was miraculously born of a virgin; without the concurrence of a man: but it should rather be understood of the kingdom of Christ, which was formed out of the Roman empire, not by number of hands, or strength of armies; but without human means, and the virtue of second causes. This kingdom was set up by the God of heaven; and from hence the phrase of the kingdom of heaven, came to signify the kingdom of the Messiah. It was so used and understood by the Jews, and so it is applied by our Saviour in the New Testament. Other kingdoms were raised by human ambition and worldly power; but this was the work, not of man but of God. This was truly, as it is called the kingdom of heaven. A kingdom not of this world; its laws, its powers were all divine.*” “As we may presume to say, that this is the only true and genuine interpretation of this passage, so likewise it is the most consonant to the sense of all ancient writers, both Jews and Christians.”†

\* Dan. ii. 44.

† Diss. on the Prophecies, p. 243, 244.

We know of no Christian expositor who does not consider this as a prediction of the gospel church. But if this church had been set up more than thirteen hundred years before, why should Daniel speak of it as an event still future. That we might not be liable to mistake, he foretold the period when it should take place. *In the days of these kings ; or during the continuance of one of them, the Roman monarchy, Christ should make his appearance, and set up his gospel kingdom.*

Conformably to this sentiment, we find our blessed Lord often speaking of the gospel dispensation under the metaphor of a kingdom. He uses the same language with respect to his church. When he said to the Jews, *If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you ;\** here he evidently meant the gospel dispensation.

We think the same was meant in that solemn threatening denounced against the Jews for their unbelief, in the following words ; *Therefore say I unto you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.†* By which he evidently meant the gospel dispensation, with all its privileges and blessings : not the old Jewish dispensation and the rites belonging to that. No ; these, in the sense of our Saviour, were neither taken from them, nor given to any others. The Jews still retain many of them, and in their present situation exhibit much the same appearance of visibility as a church, as they did during the first four hundred years, before their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Circumcision was the principal rite by which they were then distinguished from other nations : They are to this day distinguished by the same.

Our Lord, upon a different occasion, replied to the same cavilling Jews, *Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not ; but the publicans and the harlots BELIEVED him. And ye, when ye had seen it, REPENTED not after ward that ye might BELIEVE him.‡* As the pharisees

are here charged with impenitence and unbelief, we may suppose that the publicans and harlots who are said to go into the kingdom of God, were such as under the ministry of John were brought to true repentance, to believe on the Messiah whom he declared to be at hand, and to be baptized of him. If the kingdom of God, or gospel church, and the Jewish church were the same, then these *publicans and harlots*, before they embraced John's doctrine, yea, and the pharisees too, were all in the kingdom of God ! for they undoubtedly all belonged to the Jewish church.

The scribes and pharisees sat in Moses' seat, and were persons of the first eminence in the Jewish church ; but Jesus said to his disciples, *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.\**

Whether the kingdom of grace, or the kingdom of glory be intended in this passage, this much is evident, that being members of the Jewish church, did not qualify for either.

This argument will be further illustrated and strengthened by the words of our suffering Redeemer, when interrogated by Pilate. *Thine own nation*, said he, *and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done ?* Jesus answered, MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD ! *if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews.†* By this declaration Jesus has given an indelible character to his church ; and which must forever distinguish it from the Jewish church. The latter was not only organized as a body politic, but its men of war were marshalled, and frequently led to the fight by military chieftains.

It must be evident to every candid mind that the Jewish church, in every stage of it, notwithstanding it contained some true believers, was principally of this world. This must be the case with every other church, formed strictly upon the principles of infant membership, whether they are admitted by circumcision or baptism. We appeal to the common sense of Christ

\* Matt. v. 20.

† John xviii. 35, 36.

tians, whether, to admit the hypothesis laid down by the Pædobaptists, that all the children of believers have a right to membership in the gospel church, would not, if put in practice, make such as are of the world, a vast majority in most churches? Are not the baptized, in most Pædobaptist congregations, to those who actually take upon themselves a voluntary profession of religion and give evidence that they are real Christians, as two to one? Probably a much greater majority. If these are all included in the Christian church, (and they must be, or their argument is lost) can it be said, that such a church is not of this world? We might with as much propriety say, that a town-meeting was not of this world, because a number of the qualified voters were Christians. For in the latter there would probably be about the same proportion of Christians, as in the former.

It would be an insult upon the understanding of men, to attempt to maintain the two opposite points, that new-born infants must be admitted to membership in the Christian church, and that the church was nevertheless *not of this world*, but a spiritual body. A man who could believe this, would have but little difficulty in believing *transubstantiation*, or any other absurdity.

No man who examines with candour the history of the Jewish church from the days of Abraham, till the destruction of their nation and temple by Vespasian, but what must conclude, that the true believers at any period would have been, when compared with the whole nation, only a *small minority! a remnant according to the election of grace.* They were so few, and so unknown in the time of Elijah, that he thought he was left alone. And notwithstanding the answer of God happily convinced him of his mistake, yet the number mentioned were few compared with the thousands of Israel and Judah.

Can we seriously suppose that it was the intention of Jesus Christ to continue this church in its then visible form, or to set up another like it? Does the New Testament lead to such a conclusion? Does not the language of Christ and his apostles confirm exactly the



opposite? *Ye are the light of the world*, said Jesus to his little church. *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.\** *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.†* This is the manner in which our blessed Lord designated his disciples. The particular manner in which they were brought to an interest in the blessings of this kingdom, is thus expressed by the apostle to the Colossians: *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.‡* Every person who claims the privilege of the Christian name, ought to be able to give the same reason of his hope. Such persons may say with the apostle, *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, or grant us grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably.* None but such as experience renewing grace, possess any one of these qualifications. No others are lights in the religious world. No others have been translated from the darkness of the world and sin into the kingdom of God's dear Son. No others have received this immoveable kingdom.

When the Saviour asked his disciples their opinion concerning himself, Peter answered, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!* And Jesus answered and said unto him, *Blessed art thou Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* And I say unto thee, *thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The Jewish church did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. They considered and treated him as an impostor. They charged him with blasphemy, and said, *he being a man made himself God.* But every truly enlightened Christian can subscribe with Peter, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* The rulers of the Jewish church blasphemously replied to him, *Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?* This was the insulting language of the leaders of that very church, which we are

\* Matt. v. 14.

† John xv. 19.

‡ Col. i. 13.

told was the gospel church, and was continued without any "essential alteration."\*

Our *fourth* and last argument to prove that the gospel church is totally distinct from, and independent of, the Jewish, shall be drawn from facts recorded in the New Testament. "Facts are stubborn things."

If (as the advocates for infant baptism assert) the gospel church did incorporate with the old Jewish church, we may expect such an account of it in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, as to put the matter out of dispute. Should we find them entirely silent on a subject of so much moment, its truth might very justly be called in question. But if, instead of being silent, we find them to have recorded facts which irresistibly prove the contrary, we should suppose skepticism itself would cease to doubt. Let us proceed to examine the proof. *To the law and to the testimony*, as the final umpire, we cheerfully repair, and pledge ourselves to abide the decision.

If our minds are open and candid, we shall find the narrative plain and simple; the facts so abundant, and so variously interspersed, that we cannot easily mistake them. In order to trace them with precision, we must travel back to the commencement of this new dispensation.

Christian reader, if your Bible be at hand, turn to the third chapter of Matthew, and read, and examine it candidly; or will you permit me to repeat a few sentences, and make some remarks upon them? *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea.* Who was this John the Baptist? He was the person of whom Isaiah spake in prophecy. *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* Did John derive his authority to preach and baptize from the Jewish church? Most certainly he did not. For it appears that he had been *in the deserts* from early life *until the day of his shewing unto Israel.*† How came he then by his authority? The evangelist John shall answer: *There was a man SENT FROM GOD whose name was John.* The Jewish church sent a deputation of priests and

\* Vid. P. Edwards, p. 107.

† Luke i. 80.

Levites to him to inquire who he was ; whether he were the Messiah ? if not, why he baptized ?\* By which it appears that he did not stand in connexion with that church, nor act under its authority. It will be here recollected how completely Christ confounded the leaders of that church by this simple question. *The baptism of John, said he, whence was it ? from heaven or of men ?*† The chief priest was among the party ; they must therefore certainly have known if John had been inducted into the priest's office by them ; or had in any way received his authority from them. There can be no imaginable reason assigned for their concealing it, if this had been the case. Could they with propriety have asserted the fact, it would have relieved them from their present embarrassment. If John did not derive his authority from the officers of the Jewish church, (the only proper medium through which it could pass) he must have acted independently of them.

We ask again, did John preach the same doctrine which the leaders of this church did ? It is manifest he did not : for they *taught for doctrine the commandments of men*, Christ himself being judge. But John preached the true gospel of the kingdom. He pointed his hearers to the Saviour, as *the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world*, and exhorted the people to repent and believe on him. Such as received his doctrine, and confessed their sins, he baptized in *Jordan*.

Was there any institution, or even custom in the Jewish church, which required John to baptize his converts in Jordan ? None has ever yet been produced. Although there were *divers washings* appointed in the ritual of Moses, and others added by the superstitious Pharisees ; yet they all differed widely from John's baptism, both in manner and design.

Towards the close of this chapter, we have the following account of our Saviour. *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me ? And Jesus answering, said*

\* John i. 25.

† Matt. xxi. 25.

unto him, *Suffer it to be so now ; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, WENT UP STRAIGHTWAY OUT OF THE WATER. Reader ! lay your hand upon your heart, and ask yourself, in the fear of God, if you can possibly believe that either John or Jesus in the whole of the transactions related in this chapter, had any thing to do with the Jewish church, or their leaders ? In spite of all your prejudices, is there not a monitor within that tells you, they had not ?

Much pains has been taken to prove that when Christ said, *thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*, his meaning was, that it was necessary for him to be baptized by John in Jordan, to fulfil a law which required the sons of Aaron, when entering into the priest's office, to be washed at the door of the tabernacle.\* What a happy knack some men have, in reasoning from analogy ? But there is one unlucky circumstance attending this argument, and which wholly ruins it. That is, that by the same law which required the above washing at the door of the tabernacle, Jesus Christ could not be a priest of that dispensation ; as he was neither of the sons of Aaron, nor of the tribe of Levi ; but of *the tribe of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.*

If we look into the next chapter, we shall find the manner in which Christ proceeded in gathering the New Testament church. At the 18th verse it is said ; *And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him.† And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets ; and straightway he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him ‡ Again, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus*

\* Vid. Messrs. Fish and Crane, and others.

† Matt. iv. 18—22.

‡ Mark i. 19, 20.

*as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God ! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.\**

*And a certain scribe came and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest ; and another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.† And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom ; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.‡*

*The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Philip caught the Spirit of this new sect so entirely, as not only to be willing to follow Jesus, but to use his influence to proselyte others. He soon after met with Nathanael, and said to him, We have found HIM of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ? Philip saith unto him, Come and see*

These facts, recorded by the evangelists, place before us a complete history of the commencement of the gospel church. But in this account not a trace of its connexion with the Jewish church can be perceived.

When Jesus Christ appointed his apostles the first officers in his new church, did he consult the chief priests, the scribes and pharisees ? Or did he appoint them by his own authority, totally independent of them ? Facts all unite in demonstrating the latter.

The reasonings of our Pædobaptist brethren have always appeared to us exceedingly defective on this point. They uniformly argue, that the Jewish and Christian churches are the same ; and that the latter is no more than a continuance of the former : but they have never shown us when, where, or how the latter church was connected with the former : and it is believed that they never can. They have seemed wholly to step over this point. At one time they present to us the Jewish church under the covenant of circumcision, enjoying many privileges and blessings ; by and by, they

\* John i. 35—37.

† Matt. viii. 19, 21.

‡ ix. 9.



present us the gospel church enjoying very different and much greater privileges, and tell us that this is the same church, only under a different dispensation. But if this be a fact, would not Jesus Christ and the leaders of the Jewish church have acted in concert? and would not the disciples of Christ, and the members of that church have been in harmony with each other? Would there not be as much propriety in saying that the protestant church, and the papal church from which they separated were one and the same? Some branches of the protestant church approximate much more to the papal, than the gospel church did to the Jewish. But if protestants acknowledge their church to be but a continuance of the old papal church, we think they ought at least to make some confession for having abused their *Alma Mater*, by calling her the "old whore of Babylon"—"The mother of abominations, &c."

It is a fact which no one can deny, that Jesus Christ, during his personal ministry, did collect a large number of disciples and followers of both sexes: that he sent forth seventy disciples at one time to preach the gospel, and to evince its power by miracles. That these all stood totally unconnected with the old Jewish church is abundantly evident, from the unceasing opposition which the latter made to the former. We beg to know whether Christ's disciples, with their Master at their head, did not constitute a church, a complete church in gospel order? If so, here were two churches existing at the same time in direct opposition to each other: for it must be remembered that the kingdom of God was not yet taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles. We ask, which of these two is to be considered as the *true church*? The Jewish church continued its visible state, and retained its visible forms of worship long after the establishment of Christianity. And there was just as much friendship in this old church towards the followers of Jesus, when they stoned Stephen to death for no other fault, than because he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and when they caught Paul in the temple and were ready to pull him in quarters, as when

Jesus was in the midst of them, teaching and preaching the kingdom of God.

Did Christ treat the Jewish church in such a manner, or receive such treatment from it, as would lead us to suppose that he considered it as his church, which he purchased with his own blood ?

To elucidate the idea, please to examine the debate between Christ and the leaders of this church, recorded in the eighth chapter of John. In this, Jesus declared himself the *light of the world*. The Pharisees disbelieved it, and told him plainly *that he bore record of himself, and that his record was not true.* (ver. 12, 13.) Christ told them that they were ignorant both of him and of his Father. (v. 19.) *Ye are,* said he, *from beneath, I am from above ; ye are of this world, I am not of this world.—If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* (v. 23, 24.) In order to evade the force of Christ's doctrine, they pleaded their covenant privileges : *We be Abraham's seed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed,* replied Jesus ; *but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's CHILDREN, you would do the works of Abraham.* Christ seems to admit that they were Abraham's natural seed, but denies that they were his children in a spiritual sense. Unwilling to acknowledge themselves destitute of religion, and to prove that they had a fair title to heaven without being indebted to him, they declared that *God was their Father.* *Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me : for I proceeded forth and came from God ; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.* (v. 41, 42.) At length Christ said to them, *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.* (v. 44.) With a view no doubt to show the keenness of their resentment at this plain dealing, they answered him, *Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ?* Does this look like that language of love which subsisted between Christ and his true church ? Every candid heart will reply, No.

Is it possible to bring our minds to believe that the true church could ever treat the blessed Saviour as the Jews treated him? They not only despised and held him in contempt, calumniated and abused him, but actually persecuted him to death! Who was it that the traitor covenanted with, to sell his Lord for thirty pieces of silver? Was it to an ignorant mob, made up of Gentile libertines, and headed by some fanatical leader? No such thing. Judas made his calculations with more certainty. He went directly to the CHIEF PRIESTS, the principal leaders in this church. And do you think they would let so fair an opportunity pass, to get into their hands a man whom they hated? Surely no. The bargain was closed at once; and Judas was sent with a band of men to arrest him.\* Who was it first formed the design of putting Jesus to death? The principal leaders of the Jewish church. *And when the morning was come, ALL THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND ELDERS of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.* In order to accomplish their murderous design, he must be delivered to Pilate the governor, to pass sentence of death upon him. Pilate, though a Gentile, seemed to have some sense of moral justice, and was desirous to understand the real cause of their complaint. But who arraigned him before Pilate's bar? *Thine own nation, said he, and the chief priests have delivered thee to me—What hast thou done?* Jesus at once stated the true ground of the controversy. *My kingdom, said he, is not of this world.* The more Pilate heard and saw, the stronger was his conviction of the innocence of Jesus. Several means had been employed to avert the sentence, but without effect. At length, recollecting that it had been a custom at this feast to release a prisoner, and having two, he hoped they would choose Jesus. But in this he was deceived. His persuasions were all in vain. Malice had fixed the infernal purpose too strongly in their breasts to be shaken by his reasonings. No, Jesus must die. His crucifixion was determined on. Hence *the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.†* O thou insulted,

\* Matt. xxvi. 14, 15, 47. † Matt. xxvii. 20.

suffering Lamb of God ! were these the leaders of thy church, thy true gospel church ? Must we consider them as thy friends, while manifesting this murderous opposition to thee, merely because they descended from the loins of Abraham ? We cannot. Our hearts revolt at the horrid thought.

Nor can we believe that this was the church into which the Gentile converts were grafted. No ; it was the church gathered by Jesus, and his apostles ; from among the Jews indeed, but composed only of the converts to his new doctrine ; of separates from the old Jewish church and religion. No others composed any part of the New Testament church. Must we not shut our eyes against the clearest light to believe otherwise ? We certainly must.

This, however, is one of the main pillars on which Pædobaptism rests, That this old Jewish church and the New Testament church are the same. This is Mr. Edwards's potent argument, with which he has assailed the Baptists, and laid them (in his imagination) heaps upon heaps, as Samson did the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass. But with all his zeal to maintain the *sameness* of the Jewish and Christian churches, his conscience compelled him to make one very just concession. His conscience, did I say ? No, I rather think he was a little off his guard. Speaking of the Jewish people collectively, he says ; " As to their character, it is certain that, a *few* only excepted, they were upon the whole the DEADLY ENEMIES OF CHRIST and his doctrine " (p. 62.) Reader ! pause a moment, and reflect upon this declaration. That the Jewish church, a few, a *very few*, excepted, were the *deadly enemies* of Christ and his doctrine ! And yet, if there be any truth in Mr. Edwards's argument, this was not only a *sample* of the gospel church, but the church in reality ! the same with that under the gospel dispensation. A little altered indeed in " diet " and " dress," but identically the same.\* And was this one of Mr. Edwards's " candid reasons for leaving the Baptists," because they do not believe Christ's church to be principally made up of

\* Vid. p. 46, 48.



his *deadly enemies*? The Baptists entertain no such horrid idea. If he believes his own reasoning, it was certainly a very sufficient one for his leaving a community who think very differently: For *how can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

We have thus briefly stated a few facts which serve to show the temper and feelings of the Jewish church towards our blessed Redeemer and his doctrine, and also what treatment he received from them.

We will now inquire, whether the apostles of Jesus Christ agreed in sentiment with the advocates for infant baptism, with respect to the *sameness* of the Jewish and Christian churches.

Immediately after the ascension of the Saviour, we are presented with a view of his *little flock*; this new gospel church in a company by themselves. Here we find a body of disciples, amounting to about one hundred and twenty, assembled in an open room at Jerusalem. *These all continued with one accord, in prayer and supplications, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.* Here were no scribes nor pharisees intermixed. No one who retained his standing in the Jewish church, nor any who felt unfriendly to the interests of Jesus. The traitor himself no longer obtruded his unhallowed presence among them. They were all united in love.\* *When the day of pentecost was fully come, we find them again together, with one accord in one place.* Here the apostles experienced the fulfilment of what had been predicted by John, and promised by Christ. They were all *baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire.* No sooner was this noised abroad, than a vast multitude collected. Some were struck with wonder and amazement; others mocked, and said *these men are full of new wine.* But Peter stood up and addressed the multitude in a discourse peculiarly adapted to the occasion, and to the circumstances of his audience. His preaching was attended with a marvellous display of divine power. He concluded in the following words; *Therefore let ALL the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom YE HAVE CRU-*

\* Acts i. 14.



CIFIED, both Lord and Christ. Here the house of Israel or Jewish church collectively, is charged with having taken the Son of God, and with wicked hands crucified and slain him. The word delivered by Peter became sharper than a two-edged sword ! And they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.\*

*What shall we do ?* was the language of those wounded-hearted sinners. Repent, said Peter, and be baptized every one of you. He commanded none to be baptized, but what he first commanded to repent. The promise of remission of sins, and of the gift of the Holy Ghost, was not made to all indiscriminately, but was predicated upon their repentance and baptism, upon their being called by the Lord, and not upon the baptism of impenitents. The promise quoted by the apostle, as an encouragement to them and to their children to repent, must also be understood with this limitation.

\* The apostle here no doubt alluded to the promise recorded by the prophet Jeremiah. *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah : not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ; After these days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know ye the Lord ; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them saith the Lord ; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more †* This new covenant was established upon better promises than those contained in the covenant of circumcision. God did not engage in that, the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, to put his law in their inward parts. That covenant was outward in the flesh ; this is inward, the law written upon the heart. In this new covenant, the very least knows the Lord. In that, many who were the greatest in office and power, knew not the Lord.

† Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

We cannot possibly agree with Mr. Edwards in his explanation of this passage. His reasoning, to us appears both sophistical and absurd. He is so very anxious to secure a place for infants in the gospel church, that he seems willing to pass over the real blessings contained in the promise, and fix on one which by his own reasoning they were already in possession of. After holding the word *children* in a state of torture, until it has passed three stages of discussion, he thinks he has gained the important point ; i. e. "That infants are placed in the same relation to baptism, as they were of old to circumcision." (p. 71, 72.)

What an admirable comment upon the apostle's words ! Here were a number of persons pricked in the heart, and crying out in distress, *What shall we do ?* They are told for their comfort, that *the promise is to you and to your children* ; by which they were to understand that they were placed in the same relation to baptism as they were of old to circumcision ! What consolation this must be to a heart throbbing under the pangs of conviction, or inquiring with the ardor of a new-born soul after duty ! But we will leave Mr. Edwards for the present.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the sacred historian. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized ; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* We ask, To whom were these converts added ? Was it to the old Jewish church ? or to the new gospel church ? for they both existed at this time ; but in total opposition to each other. We only wish that conscience may make the decision. 'This solemn and interesting account closes with these words ; *And the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved.* What church, we ask again, was this ? Was it the old persecuting Jewish church ? no one we think can possibly believe it. No ; they were taken from that, and added to the Christian church. We are confident that there cannot be an instance produced of a single act of Christian fellowship between these two churches. How often in the book of Acts, that authentic history of the primitive Christians, do we

find the leaders of the gospel church dragged before the rulers of the Jewish church, and by their orders beaten and imprisoned ; and straitly charged to speak no more in the name of Jesus ! If both were the church of Christ, his kingdom was certainly divided against itself ; and our Lord has told us the fate of such a kingdom. The papal and protestant churches were never more at variance in the hottest times of persecution than these two churches were, until the gospel dispensation was taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles.

It may possibly be said that these arguments only prove the corruptions that were in that church, but do not affect its real state. To determine whether an old house ought to be taken down, in order to build a new one in its room, it would not be necessary to know what it once was, but only to examine it in its present state ; and should a few pieces of timber be saved from this old wreck, and put into the new building, we should hardly suppose any person would say it was the same, the very same house. The application is easy.

In order to bring this argument to a close, we ask, Were not the principal opposers and persecutors of Jesus Christ and his followers, officers and members of the Jewish church ? Were they not considered at the time to be in regular standing ? To exemplify the question, we will select one only ; it shall be the great apostle of the Gentiles. Was he not a member of the Jewish church, at the very time he was persecuting the poor saints of Jesus, and haling them both men and women to prison ?

The account which Paul has given of himself will probably satisfy us on this point. In a statement which he made to the Galatians respecting his call to preach, he says ; *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after man ; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past, in THE JEWS' RELIGION ; how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it. And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation ; being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.* But—But pray, Paul, let us interrupt your

narrative a moment, that you may explain yourself. You have twice mentioned the *Jews' religion*, as if it were distinct from the religion of Jesus Christ. You have also said, that you *persecuted and wasted the CHURCH OF GOD*. You most certainly do not mean the old Jewish church, for if we understand you, you were acting in concert with that. "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; who knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify) that after the STRAIGHTEST SECT OF OUR RELIGION, I lived a pharisee." And in my zeal for that church, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison." I did not do it however, in a riotous manner without the concurrence of my brethren, but "*having received authority from the chief priests*. And when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme: and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."\* "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and *called me by his grace*, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood—but I went into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, which were *in Christ*: but they had heard only, that he who persecuted us in times past, *now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed*. And they glorified God in me."†

In this man, before his conversion, we have a complete specimen of the general temper of the Jewish church, during most of the time the gospel was continued among them. This will be evinced by the following quotation from one of his epistles. "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye have also suffered like things of your *own countrymen*, even as they

\* Acts xxvi. 4, 5, 9, 10, 11.

† Gal. i. 11—17 and 22—24.

have of the *Jews* : who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us ; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men.”\*

From the evidence arising from the facts which have been briefly detailed in the preceding pages, the following conclusion irresistibly forces itself upon the mind, viz. That the gospel church is not a continuation of the old Jewish church, but totally distinct : That it differs essentially in its constitution ; in the qualifications required in order to membership ; in its visible form, that being national, this being selected and particular : That the predictions and declaration of the prophets, of Jesus Christ and his apostles, all present it to us as a distinct body : That facts which cannot be controverted, determine that they never were united, although they both actually existed at the same time ; but that the latter was constantly opposed and persecuted by the former.

Hence we conclude, that as the two churches are every way so distinct, the right of infants to membership in the Jewish church is insufficient to sustain their claim to membership in the gospel church. If they have any claim to membership under the gospel dispensation, it must be founded in the special provisions of this dispensation, and not inferred from any thing in the former. “ The truth,” saith Dr. Emmons, “ is, we must learn the peculiar duties of believers under the present dispensation of the covenant of grace, from the dispensation itself, which enjoins all the peculiar duties which belong to it. If believers are now to baptize their children,—it is not because they were once obliged to circumcise them.”†

If these things are true, as we verily believe they are, we beseech our brethren not to shut their eyes against the light, and reject them. O that the great Head of the church would enlighten each of us more perfectly in the knowledge of his will !

\* 1 Thess. ii. 14, 15.

† Reply to Dr. Hemmenway.



## SECTION IV.

*Strictures on the Rev. PETER EDWARDS's "Candid Reasons for renouncing the Principles of Antipædobaptism."*

THIS gentleman has been several times named in the preceding pages, and the book now before us referred to.

My design is only to make strictures. It cannot therefore be expected that I should follow him in all his long-laboured syllogisms, nor attempt to unravel all his intricate windings. This task is rendered the less necessary, as Dr. Jenkins's very able reply is before the public. In this, a candid reader will discover much solid learning, and a thorough knowledge of the subject discussed.

In writing these strictures, I have no wish to detract from Mr. Edwards's "*hard-earned fame*," nor to speak diminutively of his abilities as a polemic writer. I wish I could in justice acknowledge him to be a fair and honourable disputant. Whether my judgment is warped by prejudice, is not for me to say; but his reasonings have ever appeared to me extremely sophistical and uncandid. The reasons on which I found this opinion will be seen in the course of these animadversions.

The reader is also notified, that no attempt will be made in the ensuing pages to vindicate Mr. Booth, as the writer has never seen his book to which Mr. Edwards has replied. Nothing therefore will be noticed, only what implicates our sentiments generally.

Mr. Edwards, in his introduction, gives what he calls "a fair statement of the question." This statement is divided into five *Theses*. His first *Thesis* we should not object to, had he conducted the dispute according to the principles there stated. It stands thus—*Thesis* 1. "That we set aside all those things about which we are agreed, and fix our attention to that only on which a difference of opinion may fall." "Secondly, that this

difference be stated in a manner the most plain and simple." The reader will judge, whether Mr. Edwards has not violated the first of these rules, in the most flagrant manner. Has he not brought up the subject of *female communion*, and employed it as a main argument against the Baptists? Yea, the very argument, which he boastingly tells us that he has used with so much dexterity, as to silence every Baptist he has met with in a *quarter of an hour*. And yet this is a subject that we are entirely agreed in. What has female communion to do with infant baptism? Nothing at all.

*Thesis 2.*—"Antipædobaptists consider those persons as meet subjects of baptism, who are supposed to possess faith in Christ, and those only. Pædobaptists agree with them in this, that believers are proper subjects of baptism, but deny that such only are proper subjects. They think, that, together with such believing adults, *who have not yet been baptized*, their infants have a right to baptism as well as their parents." The last part of this position implies what is not true, which will be seen in our remarks upon the next.

*Thesis 3.*—"From this view of the sentiments of each, it appears that both parties are agreed on the article of adult baptism, which must therefore be set aside, as a matter entirely out of dispute; for it can answer no good purpose for one to prove what the other will not deny." An incautious reader by this statement would be led to suppose, that the two denominations had the same views of adults being proper subjects of baptism. But it is evident that we differ widely on this subject. It is not true, that Pædobaptists allow adult baptism, only under certain limitations. They indeed admit such as have never been baptized in infancy, when they come to be believers. But why do they? Evidently because they could never baptize them before. Their own, or their parents' consent was wanting. But could they carry their sentiments into complete effect, it would put an entire end to believers' baptism; for they would baptize every infant soon after it was born; nor would they allow them ever after,

should they become believers, to be baptized agreeably to their own consciences, upon the pain of being denounced as Anabaptists. This difference of sentiment on this point cannot be denied, without denying an obvious truth. It is therefore but mere evasion, to say, that we are agreed on this point, and that they hold to *believers' baptism* as well as we. They certainly would exterminate it out of the world if they could.

But what is Mr. Edwards making this preparation for? The answer is easy. It is to get rid of that burden of proof arising from those qualifications, indiscriminately required in order to baptism, with which his denomination have constantly been pressed by the Baptists.

We shall not at present object to his statement in the close of this position, viz. "The simple question which remains to be decided is this, Are infants fit subjects of baptism, or are they not? On this question the whole turns. The Pædobaptists affirm, and the Anti-pædobaptists deny." But we shall take the liberty to disprove their fitness, by urging their want of those qualifications required by the institution, without asking Mr. Edwards's consent.

*Thesis 4.*—"The simple question being as we have now stated it, Are infants *fit subjects* of baptism, or are they not? it will clearly follow, that all those places which relate to believers' baptism, can prove nothing on the side of the Baptists; and the reason is, they have no relation to the question." No, Mr. Edwards, we shall not consent to this. You might very easily indeed beat us all in a quarter of an hour, if we would be so foolish as to consent to let you first tie our hands. But *in vain is the snare spread in the sight of any bird*. You ask, "Are infants fit subjects of baptism?" How are we to judge of the fitness of a subject any otherwise than by the qualifications required by the institution? No, no, say you, these all respect adults, and therefore are irrelevant to the subject. Allow, if you please, that these respect adults only, and will not this conclusion inevitably follow, that none but adults were to be baptized?

If the qualifications indefinitely required by the institution of baptism, (I say *indefinitely*, because the scriptures give us no idea of one kind of qualifications for adults, and another for infants) if these are to form no part of the rule by which we are to judge of the *fitness* of infants, what are we to judge by? Why truly, Mr. Edwards has furnished us with a very compendious method indeed. We must go back almost two thousand years before the institution of baptism existed, and examine another institution every way different in its nature, mode, and design, and belonging to another church equally different from the Christian church; and upon this we are to make up our judgment respecting the *fitness of infants* for a New Testament institution! Must not a man have a front like brass, who can charge his opponents with sophistry, while he himself is guilty of such management as this, to keep men from seeing the truth? It is believed, that there is not another subject in the world, on which men would reason so inconclusively. Were a dispute to arise concerning the right of citizenship in the United States, how should we determine the question? Should we determine it by the constitution of Great-Britain, or by the constitution of the United States? We think there would be but one opinion in this case, *i. e.* that it must be determined by the constitution under which we now live. Why should we not determine the qualifications for an institution of the gospel in the same way?

Mr. Edwards's fifth *Thesis* is a mere recapitulation of the preceding; therefore it is thought unnecessary to state it.

We shall now proceed to his statement of the arguments which the Baptists bring against infant baptism. "Of these," he tells us, "there are two only." If he had allowed us to speak for ourselves, it is more than possible we might have mustered up one or two more. But what are the two which he allows us to bring?

First, "*A person who has a right to a positive institution must be expressly mentioned as having that right; but infants are not so mentioned, therefore they have not that right.*"

This argument he supposes requires that express mention be made in the scriptures of the baptism of



infants. This he says, is “*assuming, contracted, false.*” “It is very assuming, because it seems to dictate to the ever blessed God in what manner he ought to speak to his creatures. Since it is no where contained in his word, and he knows best how to communicate his mind to men, it little becomes such creatures as we are to lay down rules by which he shall proceed.” Is it not a little *assuming* for Mr. Edwards to insist upon our receiving and approving a practice which he allows not to be *contained in the word of God*? Reader, pause a moment, and reflect upon this “precious confession.” If you are a Baptist, will you not feel more thankful than ever, that the sentiments you practise are most plainly *contained* in God’s word? Will not Mr. Edwards’s new friends blush for this unguarded concession, and wish he had been a little more careful? He adds, “It is very contracted, because it supposes we cannot understand what God says, but when he speaks to us in one particular way.” No Sir, you mistake: it supposes we cannot understand him when he does not speak at all. For you will please to remember, you have just said, *it is no where contained in his word.* And this is the only medium through which he has spoken to us respecting positive institutions. But,

“It is very false: because (to wave all other instances, and fix on one only) a subject is admitted to a positive institute, and that admission is according to truth, and so held and practised by all who use Christian rites, when there is no express law or example to support it in all the word of God. It is the case of women to which I allude, and their admission to the Lord’s table.”

This is Mr. Edwards’s knock-down argument, with which he has so often vanquished the Baptists. He has spent twelve pages in attempting to prove that there is no explicit warrant for female communion; and therefore that it stands upon the same footing of infant baptism. His meaning is, that the right of infants to baptism is equally plain, and as well supported by the scriptures, as the right of females to communion. But he has unhappily destroyed his argument by his own statement. For he says, female communion “*is held*



*and practised by all who use Christian rites."* If infant baptism were equally as plain, what reason can be assigned for its not being as universally admitted? He is undoubtedly correct in this, that no Christian sect who have admitted the celebration of the Lord's supper, have disallowed the right of females. It is equally certain, that from the first mention of infant baptism in ecclesiastical history, it has met with opposition. This opposition has not been made by those who professed to be governed by the decrees of popes and councils; but such as professed to take the word of God for their guide in all matters of religion. What rational account can be given for the opposition made to infant baptism from time immemorial to the present, while females have all this time remained in the unmolested enjoyment of communion; unless it be, that the latter is clearly established in the New Testament, while no evidence can be found for the former.

Those who deny infant baptism, have undoubtedly the same tender affection for their children as those who practise it; nor can we admit that they feel less concerned for their eternal salvation. Hence nothing, but the want of scripture to support it, leads them to deny its validity.

We will now take the liberty to vary Mr. Edwards's third *Thesis*, and put *female communion* in the place of *adult baptism*, and he and his friends will then see the full force of his argument.

*Thesis 3.*—"From this view of the sentiments of each, it appears that both parties are agreed in the article of *female communion*, which must therefore be set aside, as a matter entirely out of dispute: for it can answer no good purpose for one to prove what the other will not deny." Very well: then here we will leave it.

*Argument 2.*—The second argument which Mr. Edwards allows the Baptists to bring against the baptism of infants, he expresses as follows:

"The scriptures require faith and repentance as requisite to baptism, but as infants cannot have these, they are not proper subjects of baptism. Infants, say the Baptists, cannot believe, cannot repent; and none should be baptized without faith, &c."

“The most expeditious way, says Mr. Edwards, of *destroying* this argument is this. They say the scriptures require faith and repentance in order to baptism. I ask of whom? The answer *must be of adults*; for the scriptures never require them of infants in order to any thing.” My Baptist brethren! do you not tremble for the fate of your argument, since it has fallen into the hands of such an Apollyon? But how is he going to work to *destroy* it? Why by telling you that all the qualifications required by the institution, have respect only to a very small proportion of the candidates for that ordinance, and that no qualifications at all are required of far the greater part.

How does Mr. Edwards prove that the scriptures do not require faith and repentance of *all* who are to be admitted to baptism? He does it in this way, by adding the word ADULTS. But it must be remembered, that the scriptures do not mention either adults or infants; but prescribe these qualifications generally and without any exception. We shall therefore insist, that the want of these qualifications must forever bar the claim of all others to this ordinance, whether adults or infants. This is ground we shall by no means give up, until it shall be fairly proved, that either Christ or his apostles did actually admit persons to baptism, who made no profession of faith and repentance. This has never yet been done, and we believe it never can be. However, we have no objection to any person's making the attempt.

Mr. Edwards, after working over this argument, so as to suit himself by changing and diminishing the force of the major proposition, at length declares it “*a glaring sophism*.” But in what does the sophistry consist? In his own management, and in nothing else. The first statement reads thus; “The scriptures require faith and repentance in order to baptism.” The meaning is generally and without any exception. When altered by Mr. Edwards, it stands thus:—“The scriptures require faith and repentance of ADULTS, in order to baptism.” It is this addition alone which can possibly expose the argument to the charge of sophistry. Place the argument upon its native ground, and it will stand thus:

“The scriptures require, *in all persons*, faith and repentance as requisite to baptism ; but some persons have not faith and repentance : therefore, all impenitents, whether adults or infants, are not proper subjects of baptism.” The reader will determine for himself, which party is justly chargeable with sophistry.

After altering the argument as above described, Mr. Edwards goes on to prove it false. We will now briefly examine his proof. He proposes “first to show that the argument is entirely fallacious ; second, point out wherein its fallacy consists.” “1. Of the fallacy of this argument. The principle of it is, that infants are excluded from baptism, because something is said of baptism which will not agree to infants. To see therefore the tendency of this argument whether it will prove on the side of truth or error, I will try its operation on these four particulars.”

1. “On the circumcision of infants. That infants were circumcised, is a fact. That they were circumcised by the express command of God, is a proof of right, &c.” This will not be disputed by any one. But how does this prove the argument of the Baptists to be false ? Why in this way, “circumcision, as it was a solemn entering into the church of God, did fix an obligation on the circumcised, to conform to the laws and ordinances of that church.”\* How is this proved ? From Gal. v. 3. “*Every man who is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law.*” What is the inference ? Here it follows in Mr. Edwards’s own words ; “Then it is clear, there was something said of circumcision which did no more agree to infants, than if it had been said, Repent and be baptized.” Supposing, Mr. Edwards, we should retort a little of your logic upon yourself, and affirm, that when the apostle says, *Every man who is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law*, he must mean, every ADULT : “for the scriptures never require *such obedience* of infants in order to any thing.” Now, Sir, if your logic is good, your argument is good

\* It would, we believe, be very difficult to describe the great solemnity which an infant of eight days old discovered, at this time of its entrance into the church.

for nothing. For the same mode of reasoning which you have adopted to destroy our argument, will destroy your own. But I mean to shew its fallacy in another way.

To the above inference our author adds, "In this respect, baptism and circumcision are upon a level; for there is something said concerning both, which will by no means agree to infants. Infants, on the one hand cannot believe and repent; and these are connected with baptism; and on the other hand, infants cannot become debtors; they cannot keep the law, and these are connected with circumcision." If I should reason after this manner, I should expect to be roundly charged with sophistry. "*Connected with baptism;*" "*connected with circumcision,*" says Mr. Edwards. But, Sir, are they connected alike? Must not every person, by a moment's reflection, see that they are totally different? Baptism does not merely "fix an obligation" to believe and repent at some future period; but requires a profession of faith and repentance, as a previous qualification for the ordinance. Circumcision did not require any previous obedience to the law, in order to qualify a person for that rite. The utmost that can be said of it with regard even to such adults as voluntarily choose it for themselves is, that they thereby made themselves debtors to do the whole law. The apostle's meaning is evidently this, that those who still insisted upon circumcision, as that was one of the first articles of the legal dispensation, could not be supposed to have embraced the gospel; and if they depended on their obedience to the law for justification, which was implied in their holding to circumcision, they must then consider themselves debtors to do the whole law. But can it be supposed, that the mere act of circumcision, performed on a helpless infant, without his knowledge or consent, should make him a debtor to do the whole law? It is evident Paul had nothing of this in view, when he circumcised Timothy. I do not think it constituted him a debtor to do the whole law. But had he chosen that method of justification in preference to the gospel, it certainly would.



But will not every person who is capable of reasoning upon a subject, see a wide difference between *qualifications previously* required by an ordinance, and an *obligation fixed* by the ordinance itself? The great Author of being fixes an obligation upon every rational creature as soon as it exists, to love and obey him. But he requires no previous exercises of love and obedience in order to qualify us for existence. It hence appears that the two cases stated by Mr. Edwards, as being entirely similar, "and upon a level," are totally unlike. Therefore, until it can be made out that qualifications *for* an ordinance, and subsequent duties arising *from* it, are the same thing, we must set down Mr. Edwards as a sophistical reasoner! But the whole will be submitted, *argumentum ad judicium*, to all whom it may concern.\*

Mr. Edwards next argues against the general requirement of faith and repentance, from the "baptism of Jesus Christ." He supposes as "he was no sinner, he could have no repentance; and since he needed no salvation from sin, he could not have the faith of God's elect."

Are there any Christians who suppose that Jesus Christ was baptized for precisely the same reasons as those by which he has enjoined the duty upon his people? Or in other words, whether his baptism signified the same things which our's does? If not, his argument is nothing to the purpose. But let us hear Mr. Edwards's own explanation. "With regard to the use of baptism," saith he, "I consider it in the light of a *mean of grace*, and I view it in the same way when applied to infants." (p. 184.) Does Mr. Edwards suppose that the baptism of Christ was a mean of grace to him? If not, it must certainly be very different from the baptism of any other person. We do not think that Jesus Christ stood in need of any such *means of grace* as infant baptism. Hence his not being a subject of faith and repentance, cannot with any fairness be urged against the general requirement of the institution, nor be pleaded as an exception in behalf of sinful creatures.

\* The reader will excuse my using these logical terms, when he recollects I am reasoning with a very logical man.



Mr. Edwards draws his third argument from the "salvation of infants." These he presumes are saved; and saved too without either faith or repentance.

We suspect he may find this argument rather unmanageable. It may possibly take a greater extent of latitude, and spread much wider than he intended. If infants may be saved without faith or repentance, (the qualifications for baptism) it must be plain that all infants may be saved. If this be an argument in favour of the baptism of some infants, it will prove equally in favour of the baptism of all infants, whether their parents are Christians, heathens, or infidels, unless the possibility of their salvation be denied. We see but two ways (to use his own modest language) to save his "argument from perdition." The first is, to prove that no infants will be saved, but such as descend from believing parents: or, second, to extend his practice of baptizing them to all infants, without exception. For if their right to this ordinance is to be supported upon the possibility of their salvation, then it cannot depend at all on the moral condition of their parents, unless their salvation depends on that likewise, which it would be absurd to pretend. We only add, if they may be saved, though incapable of the qualifications required by the baptismal institution, we should certainly suppose their baptism might be also omitted, unless that be thought of more consequence in the article of salvation than faith and repentance.

Mr. Edwards's fourth and last argument to prove that the Baptists reason sophistically when they insist on a profession of faith and repentance in order to baptism, is drawn from the "temporal subsistence of infants." He endeavours to make out that our argument goes to prove, that infants ought to be left to starve to death. His reasoning is founded on Paul's words to the Thessalonians: *We commanded you, saith the apostle, if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

Our argument, as stated by Mr. Edwards, is, that "the scriptures require faith and repentance as requisite to baptism; but as *infants cannot* have these, they are not proper subjects." This argument supposes, that

as *infants cannot* exhibit the scriptural qualifications, they are not to blame ; neither are they injured in our view in not being admitted to baptism. But the case of the *wilful idler* is every way different. He is supposed to possess sufficient ability to obtain the comfortable means of subsistence, but by a criminal negligence becomes chargeable to the church. It is wonderful to see what this doctrine of analogy can do ! It can make subjects the most antipodal, appear to stand in perfect harmony ; and such as in their nature are every way unlike, to be perfectly analogous.

By the preceding animadversions it will be seen that Mr. Edwards's four arguments, when weighed in an even balance, are found wanting. It needs only to remove their extraneous parts, and they appear at once wholly irrelevant to the subject. The argument which he opposes does not of itself prove against the truth, nor has it any unfriendly aspect but what it derives from his torturing hand.

His next attempt is to show wherein the falsity of this argument consists. This, he informs his readers, is by our placing "one thing in the premises, and another in the conclusion." But the reader must not forget that he stated the premises, and made the conclusion to suit himself. But, wherein do they disagree ? The Baptists, he says, place *adults* in the premises, and *infants* in the conclusion. This is not true. The Baptists make the premises general, and the conclusion general.

But let us inquire whether Mr. Edwards does not, by his own statement, get more in his conclusion from circumcision than can be found in the premises. His argument runs thus :—The male infants of Abraham and his posterity, were by God's command to be circumcised. What is his conclusion ? Therefore the infants of such as belong to the Christian church, both *males and females*, are to be baptized. Has Mr. Edwards here got no more in his conclusion than is found in his premises ? "O shame, where is thy blush !"

We will now meet Mr. Edwards upon his *argumentum ad hominem*, and see what the result will be. "Now, saith he, to make the argument of the Baptists

consistent, we must place infants in the premises as well as in the conclusion, and the argument will stand thus :—The scriptures require faith and repentance of infants in order to baptism ; but infants have not faith, &c. therefore infants are not to be baptized.”

We will now try his argument. Mr. Edwards sustains the plea in favour of the baptism of infants both male and female, from the covenant of circumcision ; but by that covenant no female infant was admitted to circumcision ; therefore no female infant must be admitted to baptism.

Again, “ infants, in order to visible membership, were the subjects of a religious rite ;”<sup>\*</sup> for “ circumcision was a religious rite ;” but female infants were not the subjects of that religious rite, therefore female infants were not admitted to membership in the visible church.

Thus we see, that Mr. Edwards’s logic will prove his own arguments false, and exclude female infants both from baptism and from visible membership in the church. It is impossible to support the claim of female infants to baptism upon the covenant of circumcision, without getting more into the conclusion than can be found in the premises. This may not be stigmatized as a “ glaring sophism” in a Pædobaptist ; but it will be remembered what Mr. Edwards has said of it with respect to the Baptists.

We will now spend a few minutes in examining Mr. Edwards’s “ arguments on the side of infant baptism.”

“ Infant baptism, saith he, is to be proved in the same way as female communion ;” *i. e.* by “ inference and analogy.” Well, go on, Mr. Edwards, and make your statement. “ In the first place, it is a fact acknowledged by the Baptists themselves, that infants were at an early period constituted members of the church of God.” This, Sir, is about half true. No well informed Baptist could admit it in this unqualified sense ; for it supposes that infants, females as well as males, without limitation were admitted : this wants proof. But proceed. “ In the next place, I shall pro-

\* Candid Reasons, p. 39.

duce proof, that they have a right to be so now ; and that the constitution of God by which they were made members, has not been *altered* to this day." Should you succeed, Sir, in this attempt, these consequences will inevitably follow. 1. That circumcision is still in force ; or, that the constitution of God, which expressly enjoined circumcision, has been altered ; and altered too by divine authority, so as to admit of baptism in its room. 2. If this constitution remains unaltered, female infants have no place in it : for they were neither named nor included in that rite by which you tell us infants were admitted to " visible membership." (p. 39.) Have you got through with your statement, Sir ? Not wholly. Then please to proceed. " In the last place, I shall lay down this dilemma, which will conclude the whole business ; namely :—As infants, by a *divine unalterable constitution*, have a right to be received as church members, they must be received either with baptism or without it. If they are not to be received without baptism, then the consequence is, that they must be baptized, because they must be received." Infants must be received, and therefore must be baptized, and they must be baptized because they must be received. The potency of this reasoning no man will dare to dispute.

This dilemma viewed at a distance, has, to be sure, a frightful aspect ; but upon a nearer inspection, its formidable appearance vanishes away. The sum of it is this, *That if infants have a right by the divine institution to membership in the Christian church, then they must be admitted according to that institution.*

If Mr. Edwards, by this unalterable constitution, means the covenant of circumcision, as he most certainly does, we wish to know whether female infants were admitted to membership by any religious rite, agreeably to that constitution ? If so, what was that rite ? If that *constitution* said nothing about female infants, and it was in its nature *unalterable*, we wish to be informed how they came by the right they now enjoy in the Christian church. I am afraid after all, Sir, your argument will prove fatal to the membership of these poor little female infants ! Do, Sir, have a little compassion on them, and try some way or other to provide for their mem-



bership. It will be in vain, however, to tell us that in the institution of the gospel church there is *neither male nor female, that they are all one in Christ Jesus*. This is not the unalterable constitution on which you defend their right. And it is true only of such as are believers, such as are the *children of God by faith in Christ Jesus* ;\* not such as are his merely by circumcision or baptism. These infants, if they are any way interested in Christ's salvation, have no *faith*, by your own acknowledgment ; for you have supposed them incapable of it.

In this first argument, Mr. Edwards supposes he has established the right of infant membership in the *Christian church*. But the utmost that can be fairly deduced from his arguing is, that *male infants* were admitted by divine appointment to membership in the *Jewish church*. Two points, which are all-important, yea, which are the very *sine qua non* to support his scheme, he has left totally without proof, viz. That the Jewish and Christian churches are the *same* ; and that female infants were admitted to membership by divine appointment. If Mr. Edwards has proved any thing more than I have allowed him, I have not yet been able to discern it. The result which he has formed upon his own argument, will show us what he supposes he has done, and what course he means to take in future. "These two parts of the proposition, saith he, being evinced ; namely, 1. The church membership of infants ; and, 2. Their admission to it by a religious rite ; the whole proposition which I undertake to maintain, and to lay as the ground-work from which to conclude the baptism of infants, is this,—God has constituted in his church the membership of infants, and has admitted them to it by a religious rite."†

The reader will here see the *GROUND-WORK of infant baptism* ! that it is placed at the distance of near two thousand years from the gospel dispensation ! that it does not look to that for its support, but depends entirely upon the *unalterable constitution* of the Jewish church. *these*

From ~~this~~ data Mr. Edwards proceeds to his second argument, as follows : "*The church membership of infants*

\* Gal. iii. 26, 28.

† Page 43.



*was never set aside by God or man ; but continues in force, under the sanction of God, to the present day."*

In support of this argument, he reasons thus : " Every one knows, that what was once done, and never undone, must of course remain the same : And that what was once granted, and never revoked, must needs continue as a grant." (p. 45.) " That whatever God has established should be supposed to continue, though we could bring *no* proof of its continuance, unless we are *plainly told*, that he has ordered it otherwise." It would not do, I suppose, in this instance, Mr. Edwards, to disprove its continuance by " analogy" or " inference !" Nothing but being "*plainly told*," can be admitted in this case.

To save us the trouble, however, of proving that this grant is vacated, Mr. Edwards has generously volunteered his services to prove that it is not. This proof will now be examined. " There was, says he, only one point of time, in which it is even supposed the church membership of infants was set aside ; and that was when the Gentiles were taken into a visible church state."

Here Mr. Edwards is thought to have stumbled upon the very threshold. He has taken for granted, what cannot be admitted without the most clear and unequivocal proof ; that is, that the apostles and disciples of Jesus, with their Master at their head, did not constitute a *new church*, purely upon gospel principles, but that they were incorporated with the old Jewish church, and conducted in all things agreeably to its *unalterable constitution*. Nothing in our view can be farther from the truth than this sentiment. It stands condemned by all the facts recorded in the New Testament. But having treated this subject more at large in a preceding part of this work, the reader is referred to that for proof of what is here asserted.\* It is sufficient here to say, If Christ, with more than seventy disciples, acting by his authority, totally independent of the Jewish church and its leaders, did not constitute the Christian church, we can have no idea of its existence

\* See Sect. IV.

at any other period. To say that Christ and his disciples were united as members of that old church ever after Jesus commenced his public ministry, and called these disciples to follow him as their head and leader, would be to contradict the whole history of facts recorded by the Evangelists.

Mr. Edwards supposes the "most carnal Jew that ever sat in the regions of darkness could not give a more frigid account of circumcision than Mr. Booth has done." It is believed he would be puzzled to find a Jew, either in the regions of darkness or light, when Christ was upon earth, or at any period since, who would acknowledge with him that the Jewish and Christian churches are the same. No; they know that they and their fathers hated and opposed Jesus of Nazareth and his doctrine; that they persecuted him and his followers. Yet Mr. Edwards tells us, that "the first Gentiles of whose calling we read are said to have been added to the church; but there was no church existing to which they could be added, but the *ancient Jewish church*, of which all the apostles and disciples of our Lord were members." Is there another man upon earth that can believe this? that can entertain such a degrading thought of Jesus and his disciples, as not to acknowledge them to be the true gospel church? We know that the Jewish priests and people disowned them, and treated them as the enemies of their church; but who would have ever thought that a man, professing to be a Christian minister, could be so attached to the old Jewish system, as to deny Christ and his disciples the honour of composing and constituting the *new Christian church*! Let every person who can read the New Testament, read it carefully and prayerfully, and see if he can find a single hint in the whole account, that ever the apostles and disciples of Jesus were in any sense connected with that church, after they became the followers of Christ. Mr. Edwards says, these "apostles and disciples were members of the ancient Jewish church." The evangelist John says, *The Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was the*

*Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.\** Did not the apostles and disciples confess Christ openly? Or did they dissemble, and so keep their place in the Jewish church? We leave the dilemma to Mr. Edwards and his friends.

Will the apostles of Jesus thank Mr. Edwards for associating them with his "deadly enemies?" Or implicitly charging them with the duplicity of the Pharisees, who are said to believe on him, but who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, and therefore did not confess him openly? The Jews were so far from acknowledging Christ and his followers as being members of their church, that they exultingly told the man whom Jesus had restored to his sight, *Thou art his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.†*

It would not help Mr. Edwards's argument to say, that the Jewish church now consisted of such only as embraced Christ and his doctrine. This would but deceive his readers; for this was not the Jewish, but the gospel church. This was composed of converts from Judaism to Christianity. But if Judaism and Christianity are the same, it would be nonsense to talk of being converted from one to the other. For a Jew to become a Christian, a much greater alteration was necessary than merely to change his "clothing" and "diet;" (p. 46, 48) his heart must be changed, or he would be no better than a Judas.

For Mr. Edwards therefore to prove that male infants had a right to membership in the Jewish church, is proving what nobody denies; and will afford no support to his argument, unless it can be proved, that the two churches are one and the same. This he has indeed asserted, but has given no sufficient proof of it. Nor will any man who is inquiring after truth be satisfied by having it proved, that there were some points of agreement; some analogy between the two churches. It must be proved, that Christ and his disciples did actually unite with the old Jewish church, and became

\* John ix. 22.

† John ix. 28, 29.

one with that body, or else his argument will prove nothing to the point in dispute.

Nor will it help his cause to say, "that the right of infants in *that church* was never set aside either by God or man." The question is not, whether infants were admitted to the Jewish church, but whether Christ has instituted the membership of infants in the gospel church. Let this be proved, and the dispute will be at an end.

Mr. Edwards seems willing to let go every body and every thing which belonged to that church, but the membership of infants. He acknowledges that the great body of that "church were, upon the whole, the deadly enemies of Christ and his doctrine;" that "several institutions did cease, and some new ones were ordained," but his darling point was not affected. (p. 46, 62.) How wonderful it is, that in this general wreck, he should be so fortunate as to save the membership of infants. Not only to secure it in its ancient form, but to extend it to females as well as males. He had indeed anticipated this difficulty, in carrying forward his sameness of membership. But what are the greatest mountains before such a Zerubbabel? They are at once levelled to a plain. He acknowledges that women, (the antithesis required him to have said, female infants) were not admitted into the Jewish church by any initiating rite, and concludes, "that whereas the church state among the Jews included males both adult and infant, so to the Gentile church, together with these, there is, *by the express order of God*, the super-addition of females." But pray, sir, does this *express order of God* include female infants? Or does it include only believing women? If there be any "*express order of God*" respecting female infants in the New Testament, do, in your great wisdom, be so good as to point us to it. If Mr. Edwards knows of any *express order of God*, he can have no difficulty in presenting it to our complete conviction.

We know that believing *women* are expressly mentioned; but this does nothing to establish his argument. It is said of the Samaritans, *that when they believed Philip*

*preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women.* Here we have express mention of women, but not of children.

It will appear, no doubt, to the candid reader, that to prove the existence of any right under the Jewish dispensation, is not to prove the existence of the same right under the gospel dispensation; the qualifications for membership under the latter, being so very different from those required by the former, that no plea of right can be argued from one to the other. It might as well be argued, that because a small borough in the county of Cornwall in England has a right to send a member to the British parliament, therefore a town containing the same number of inhabitants in Massachusetts has a right to send a member to Congress.

We will now proceed to Mr. Edwards's proof that the membership of infants was carried forward into the Gentile church. His first argument is taken from Matt. xxi. 43. "Therefore say I unto you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." The question here is, what was taken from the Jews, and what was given to the Gentiles? Was it the old Jewish church privileges? or, was it the gospel dispensation, which Christ called the kingdom of God? What did John mean when he thus addressed the Jews who attended his ministry, *Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand*? Did he mean that the Jewish church state was at hand? This would agree with Mr. Edwards's definition. Must it not be manifest to every candid mind that he meant the gospel dispensation, containing the spiritual kingdom of Christ?

It may be asked how this could be taken from them, unless they first had it. We answer, this *kingdom was among them*, although it did not come by observation. The gospel with all its privileges was first published to the Jews. And notwithstanding they had delivered Christ to be crucified, yet he commanded his disciples,



after he rose from the dead, to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem.*

Here they began ; and on the day of pentecost three thousand souls were converted, and *added to the church.* We appeal to the conscientious, (and we believe there are many such among the Pædobaptists,) whether the church here mentioned was the old Jewish church, or the body of believers which had been collected under the personal ministry of Christ ? The latter must be admitted ; nor can we think there would be a dissenting voice. But to admit this, would ruin Mr. Edwards's whole plan. For he has no other support for the membership of infants but what is derived from the union of these two churches.

The reader will now look at his explanation. "The taking of the kingdom, saith he, from the Jews and giving it to the Gentiles, denotes ; 1. The ceasing of a regular church state among the Jews. And this actually took place, by the destruction of some, and the dispersion of others who did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the sent of God ; while those who did receive him were at length removed from Judea, and by degrees lost the name of Jew, in that of Christian." (p. 47.) This account looks pretty plausible ; but it has one very essential defect. It happens to disagree in almost every point with matter of fact ; for instead of the destruction and dispersion of the Jews at the setting up of the gospel church, it was the Christians that were dispersed and scattered abroad by the persecution of the Jews.\* "Those who did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ," at this time, and for many years after, remained in the same church order as before the appearance of Christ. Nor is it fact, that the name of *Jew* was lost in that of *Christian*. That name and that church still continued for nearly thirty years after the DISCIPLES were first called CHRISTIANS at Antioch.

It would seem by this confused statement which Mr. Edwards has made, that the change from Judaism to Christianity was very gradual ; that it took nearly forty

\* Acts viii. 1.

years to bring it about. That the Christians were united with the Jews all the time until their dispersion. (p. 47.) Nor was the change, according to him, of any consequence when it had taken place. It consisted principally in the abolition of a few Jewish rites, and the adoption of others in their room, both meaning the same thing : "for rituals are to a church, as diet and ornaments are to a man." (p. 48.) These do not essentially alter him.

Mr. Edwards argues secondly from Rom. xi. 23, 24. from the breaking off of the Jews from the olive tree ; and the grafting in of the Gentiles. His explanation of this figurative passage is as follows. " 1. The olive tree is to denote a visible church state. 2. The Jews are said to be natural branches, because they descended from Abraham, to whom the promise was made : *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed.* 3. The Gentiles were brought into the same church state from which the Jews were broken off," &c.

Upon the above we observe—If the breaking off of the Jews from the olive tree denoted the dissolution of their church state, then the facts will not correspond with each other ; for the Gentiles were grafted into the Christian church long before the visibility of the Jewish church ceased.

The persecution and martyrdom of Stephen, appears to have taken place the same, or the year following the crucifixion of our Lord. On this persecution it is said the church was all scattered abroad, excepting the apostles. Was this the old Jewish church that was persecuted ? If so, we ask who persecuted them ? Did the few Christians persecute the whole Jewish church and scatter them ? What absurdities follow upon admitting the arguments of our opponents. This persecution was overruled for the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. Philip went down to Samaria. Saul was converted at Damascus and began to preach ; and not long after there was a church planted at Antioch in Syria. From this, Paul and Barnabas were sent into Asia Minor. Here they found some of their countrymen, and en-

deavoured to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah. Some believed, but the greater part opposed and blasphemed. *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you ; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles ; for so hath the Lord commanded us.\** In this way it appears, that the kingdom of God was taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles.

Upon the olive tree Mr. Edwards observes, “ 3. The Gentiles were brought into the same church state from which the Jews were broken off.” The object of this statement is easily discerned. It is made, no doubt, to save the membership of infants. He has no difficulty in admitting that this *same church state* is altered in almost every thing else. But the membership of infants must be retained, “ although we have no proof of its continuance, unless we are plainly told to the contrary.” But this whole statement appears to be erroneous.

If the good “ *olive tree* is to denote a visible church state,” the wild olive tree must denote the same. The antithesis certainly requires this construction. But was there any thing among the Gentiles at this time which might be called a church state ? We can form no such idea. The Gentiles were considered as branches of one tree before believing, and of another after. These two trees are both called *olives*, and distinguished only by their qualities ; the one a good, the other a wild olive. By the good olive tree, therefore, we rather think Christ himself is intended. If so, it may be asked, how can it be said, that the unbelieving Jews were branches, (as they must have been in some sense) or they could not be broken off ? We answer, They were so considered, in consequence of their visible profession. As a nation, they professed to be his people. The believing spiritual branches continued in Christ ; and were, under his immediate direction, formed into a spiritual church in visible gospel order, and the unbelieving branches cut off and rejected. This representa-

\* Acts xiii. 46, 47.

tion agrees with Christ's own words in the fifteenth chapter of John. *I am, saith he, the true vine ; my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away ; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

Here are two kinds of branches, and both said to be in Christ ; one barren, the other fruitful. The fruitless branches were in him only by profession ; the fruitful branches were united to him by a living faith and oneness of nature.

By the *wild olive tree*, we think the apostle meant to represent Adam, as the original stock from whence all the human family sprang ; and all who are not by the Spirit of God grafted into Christ the true olive, still stand in this wild or natural stock.

Christ is the *holy root*, which supplies the branches with all the real holiness they possess. From him each living member will forever draw sap and nourishment. The apostles were the *first fruits* of Christ's personal ministry ; they were made *holy* by virtue of their union with him. *If the first fruits*, saith the apostle, *be holy, the lump also will be holy.* As the first fruits were accounted a pledge of the future harvest, so were these first converts considered as a sample of the church, which should be gathered under the ministry of the word. But to consider Abraham as the *root*, as many do, is to place the branches upon a very incompetent stock. Good man ! all the real holiness he ever had, was derived from him who is the **ROOT AND OFFSPRING** of David : nor could he communicate the smallest degree of that to his posterity. Abraham, like the wise virgins, had no oil to impart.

It was unbelief that first procured the excision of the Jewish branches. This was the cause of the gospel's being taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. The Gentiles individually stand in this olive tree by faith. An unbelieving Gentile can no more stand in the good olive tree than an unbelieving Jew. *And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in : for God is able to graft them in again.* It hence follows, that neither Jew nor Gentile

can have any union with the good olive tree, but by faith.

If some unbelievers were broken off, no reason can be assigned why any should be retained. If none were retained but real believers (which we have every reason to suppose was the case) then infants were not retained, as they are not believers, by Mr. Edwards's own confession. All his arguing therefore from this passage will be of no avail, unless he can prove, that notwithstanding some unbelievers were broken off, yet still a vast proportion were retained. The idea is almost too absurd to exist, even in supposition. The reflecting reader will here ask, Did not infants and minors make a large proportion of Jewish branches which were broken off? Is it not said expressly, that the Gentiles who are grafted in, *stand by faith*? But Gentile infants have no faith: how then do they stand in this good olive tree?

It is worthy of observation, that the Gentiles are said to be grafted in *contrary to nature*. It is so, in almost every sense. The whole of religion is contrary to our depraved natures; but more especially in the following things. 1. We never graft a scion but upon the principle of its being better than the stock into which it is set. 2. The scion, though grafted into another stock, and nourished by it, still retains its own nature, and bears its own fruit. 3. A base stock is rendered valuable, in consequence of the good fruit produced by the engrafted part. But in grafting in the Gentiles, all is reversed. They are not chosen on account of their own excellency, but on Christ's account. By being grafted into this holy stock, their nature is so changed, that they bring forth the fruits of holiness. They add nothing to the essential value of the stock into which they are grafted, but receive all their real excellence from it.

Before we dismiss this argument it may be proper to answer one or two objections. 1. If Christ be intended by the olive tree, why does the apostle call the unbelieving Jews, who could have no real interest in him, *natural branches*? Answer: These Jews had no real interest in him; but as they professed to be his people,



they were considered as natural branches ; that is, it was much more natural to suppose, that the Jews who had the oracles of God committed to them, and consequently were better informed respecting the Messiah, should believe on him, than the idolatrous Gentiles, who had not these advantages. 2. If Christ be intended by this figure, why does the apostle, speaking of the Jews, call him *their own olive tree* ? Answer : He was *their own*, as it respected his human nature. He descended from the stock of Abraham, and was a *Branch which sprang from the stem of Jesse*. In this sense he was “bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh.” Hence Pilate when addressing him called the Jews his *own nation*. “Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee to me” This mode of expression is frequently made use of by Christians when praying for the conversion of the Jews, “That they may embrace *their own* Messiah.” In this sense it is said, *He came to his own and his own received him not*. These, notwithstanding their profession, were not his own in any saving sense ; they were not the children of God. *If God were your Father*, said Jesus, *ye would love me ; for I proceeded forth and came from God*. These were not spiritual, but *natural branches* only.

Every believing Gentile has great reason to be humbled under a sense of the divine goodness. It would illy become them to boast against the Jewish branches ; and should they, they would neither bear nor sustain the root, but the root them.

One observation shall close our remarks on this argument of Mr. Edwards. It is this : If the Jews were broken off because of unbelief, it is perfectly inconsistent to suppose that they will ever be grafted in again while remaining in the same state. Therefore no supposition can be admitted, that their engrafture will be national ; or even by families, including a few believers, and many unbelievers. Such a sentiment can neither be supported by reason, nor by any thing which the apostle has said in this epistle. The penitent Jews will undoubtedly come as individuals, as all others do who embrace the Saviour. For religion is at all times personal ; no one

can believe for another, any more than they can be saved for another. But when the Christian church shall travail in birth for this dear neglected people, we may hope that many spiritual children will be born among them. But even then it may be asked, *Shall the earth be made to bring forth in a day? Or shall a nation be born at once?* *Isai. lxvi. 8.*

Mr. Edwards argues, thirdly, from Rom. xi. 17. "And if some of the branches be broken off," &c. This text he endeavours to render subservient to a number of conclusions drawn from his preceding argument. The whole strength, therefore, of what is said under this head, is predicated upon that. Hence, if we have invalidated his arguments under that head, his conclusions under this will fall of course.

The entire force of these arguments taken together, rests upon this absurd and false hypothesis, namely, that while the great body of the Jewish church, including adults and infants, was broken off, some believing adults, together with their unbelieving offspring, were continued. But this is taking for granted the very point in dispute; which is, whether any unbelievers, either adults or infants, still retained their standing in the good olive tree; or were admitted, as such, to the privileges of the Christian church. The account which we have already given in this work\* of the gathering of the first Christian church, must, we think, convince every unprejudiced mind, that it was composed of individual believers only. The falsity of Mr. Edwards's arguments will be fully perceived by all who take the pains to compare them with the facts recorded in the New Testament. He has stated his conclusion as follows: "The text informs us, that some of the branches were broken off, and if only some, then not all, and that remnant *continuing in their former state* constituted the still existing church of God." (p. 54.) It here needs only to remove what is false, and this conclusion loses all its force against the Baptists. The falsehood lies in this member of the sentence; "And that remnant *continuing in their former state*," &c. By their *former state* is meant,

\* See Sect. III.

that they continued some of all descriptions believers and unbelievers, parents, children, and servants bought with money ; for this was their former state, yea, their primitive state. This we have denied, and think we have proved it untrue. We shall maintain this ground until proof is made out that some were retained in the good olive tree besides believers. This sentiment is the very ground work of his scheme. It runs through and forms the centre of all his arguments. Hence the removal of this, unhinges his whole plan.

We proceed to Mr. Edwards's fourth argument, founded on Eph. ii. 14. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."

From this passage, he informs his readers, the same conclusions must be drawn as from the preceding.

1. "That the Jewish church continued as before, and was not dissolved at the calling of the Gentiles." This may be true ; but what is this to the argument ? The papal church continued as before, and was not dissolved at the setting up of the protestant church. These Gentile converts had no more to do with the old Jewish church, than we have with the church of Rome.

2. "That the Gentiles were not formed into a new church, because the breaking down of a partition united them to the Jewish church, and *made them one*."

That the Gentiles were not formed into a new church is true. But it is not true, if we can understand the Bible, that they were united to the old Jewish church ; nor to any other which bore the name of a Jewish church ; but to the disciples of Christ, or Christian church. This was indeed formed of believing Jews, but of such only as separated from the old Jewish church. Mr. Edwards adds,

3. "That infants were in actual membership in that church to which the Gentiles were united." No, Mr. Edwards, this cannot be admitted. Your conclusion is built on false premises. You adduce it from this postulum, That a part of the old Jewish church, consisting of believers and unbelievers, constituted that body to which the Gentile converts were added. This, it is be-

lieved, has no foundation in truth, and can be supported only by your sophistical reasoning.

The union between Jews and Gentiles, spoken of in this text, was not between them generally, but only between believers. The Jewish church stood as far aloof from the Gentiles as ever.

Had Mr. Edwards duly considered the verse following that from which he has drawn the above inferences, and admitted the complete sense of the last clause, it would have saved him, in all probability, one half of his book. We will here add it, so that the reader may compare it with his remarks. *Having, saith the apostle, abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain ONE NEW MAN, so making peace.* Here the apostle informs us, that in order to effect this union, the law of ceremonial ordinances which characterized the Jewish church state, and which was the occasion of perpetual enmity between them and the Gentiles, was abolished in the flesh of Christ. Circumcision was a principal cause of this enmity. "The Jews reproached and hated the Gentiles, as being uncircumcised. The Gentiles despised the Jews for being circumcised."\* 2. The text shows us *where* they were united, namely, *in himself*; that is, in Christ. There never has been any real union between Jews and Gentiles but in Jesus Christ. 3. The text also shows us the great end and design of their being united; **FOR TO MAKE OF TWAIN ONE NEW MAN.** By this *new man*, the Christian church is undoubtedly intended. No other fair construction, we conceive, can be put upon the words. Does this language correspond with the sentiment we are opposing? Can any man believe the old Jewish church was intended? That what the apostle calls a *new man*, was not really so; but only the old one a little altered in his "clothing, ornaments and diet," but "identically the same?" Is it not plain, that by this metaphorical language, the apostle presents us with a view of the New Testament Christian church, composed only of believing Jews and Gentiles? For *in Christ*

\* Vid. Poole's Expos. in loc.

*Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Greek ; but all believers are one in him.* It hence appears, that the apostle was very far from the scheme which Mr. Edwards advocates. He appears not to have entertained the most distant idea, that the Christian church (when compared with the Jewish) was the *same man* with only his "clothes changed," but a *new man* : created in Christ to good works. The reader will now judge, whether the love of hypothesis has not carried the Author of "*Candid Reasons*," &c. wide of the truth.

In the conclusion which Mr. Edwards draws from the preceding arguments, he makes this remark—"If a law could be found in the New Testament to repeal that which had been established in the Old, I grant freely, that all that has been said on the four passages of scripture, would signify nothing." (p. 58.) The only question of importance here is this ; Is that law, which, by the statement of this writer, gave infants a visible standing in the church, repealed in the New Testament, or is it still in force ? Was there any law prior to, or independent of the law of circumcision, which gave them this right ? If so, let it be pointed out. If infants had a right to membership independent of circumcision, it would have continued, whether they were circumcised or not. If their right rested wholly upon circumcision, then it must stand or fall with that institution. A right which depends on a particular law, cannot exist any longer than that law remains in force. The question then comes to this single point. Is circumcision abolished in the New Testament, or is it not ? We presume no person will pretend it has any place in the gospel church. On what then, we ask, does the right of infants depend ? We shall probably be told, on the divine declaration, "*I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.*" If this promise contains a prior right, and which exists independently of circumcision, it will undeniably follow, that uncircumcised infants, or those that are unbaptized, stand in covenant relation to God. If this be true, then the children of those believing parents who deny infant baptism, stand interested in this promise, as really as those who are initiated



according to the institution. The parent may, indeed, be chargeable with some neglect of duty; but this cannot invalidate the claim of the child, nor make *the promise of God of none effect*.

Neither Mr. Edwards, nor any other writer on that side of the controversy, has attempted to trace the right of infants further back than the covenant of circumcision. They seem by common consent to leave them for two thousand years before, to the mercy of God, without any covenant relation, or any initiating rite. If infant membership had no existence but in connexion with circumcision, it is difficult to see, when this has ceased, how that can be continued. To us it requires some new law, under a dispensation every way different, to support and continue it in existence.

As an auxiliary to infant membership, Mr. Edwards argues from their bringing children to Christ; and endeavours to make it appear that this affords evidence of their belonging to the church. He does not pretend, as most Pædobaptists do, that they were brought to him to be baptized, but supposes "it is most likely they were brought to receive the benediction of Christ. Matt. x. 16." (p. 67.)

The bringing of these children to receive Christ's blessing, affords no more evidence of their belonging to the church, than for the mother of Zebedee's children to ask the privilege for her two sons to sit, the one on Christ's right hand the other on his left, in his kingdom, was evidence that they belonged to the Jewith church.

For whatever reasons these children were brought to Christ, one thing is certain; that is, that it was not a common thing. This appears to be a solitary instance. The conduct of the disciples in forbidding them, is full proof of this assertion. Neither the simple account stated by the evangelists, nor Mr. Edwards's laboured glossary, afford any satisfactory evidence that they were brought, or blessed, on account of their relation to the church, nor that they were at this time, or any time after, baptized.

The evangelists assign at most but two reasons for their bringing these children to Christ; one is, that

he would lay his hands on them and pray; the other, that he would bless them: probably both meant the same thing. As the act of bringing them had no connexion with their being church members, nor any thing which Christ did particularly applicable to them as such, we leave the account just as we find it stated in the scriptures, and acknowledge we know no more about it than what is there recorded.

We must beg the reader's indulgence while we just notice Mr. Edwards's argument from Acts ii. 38, 39. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." From this text Mr. Edwards argues that the phrase, "*to you, and to your children*," intends adults and infants."

Upon this we observe, if the *promise* mentioned in this text be not limited by their *repenting*, or by this clause, *as many as the Lord our God shall call*, it must be considered as unlimited. If limited as above, then it can embrace none but such as are true *penitents*, such as are *called of God, by an holy calling*. In this way it will absolutely exclude infants, until they are the subjects of repentance. If taken in an unlimited sense, it will prove that all the children of believers shall receive remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. In this it will prove too much, and so destroy itself totally. Mr. Edwards here means to apply it to the promise in the 17th chapter of Genesis made to Abraham and his seed. But if this be the promise intended by the apostle, it will include all the seed of Abraham as well as the infants of believing adults. For Mr. Edwards has before told us, that that promise was as "much to his seed as to him." *Repenting*, and being *called of God*, then, are out of the question! O no, not wholly so. I said, replies Mr. Edwards, it "intends adults and infants." By adults, Sir, I conclude you mean, that parents cannot be admitted without repentance, and being called of God; but upon their believing, their infant

offspring come into the immediate possession of a right founded in the promise made in the covenant of circumcision. This, we conclude, will be granted. It would be desirable here to know whether Mr. Edwards means to apply this promise to the *children* of believers indefinitely, or to infants only. The apostle says, *to you and to your children*; Mr. Edwards says, to adults and infants. We will state a case, and a very probable one too, and should be glad of a candid answer to it: it is this. At the age of sixty, two persons, who are the parents of a numerous family, are brought to repentance: they apply to Mr. Edwards to be admitted to the privileges of the Christian church. They have a number of children of different ages, from thirty-five, down to twenty-one; but no infants. Will he address them in the language of the apostle, and tell them, *the promise is to you, and to your children*; and on this ground admit them all to baptism? We very much doubt it. The practice of Pædobaptists generally tells us, *they* would not. But on what principle can these children be refused? The promise is to you and to your children. These are as much their children, as if they were infants of only eight days old. The apostle has used the term *children*, without any limitation as to age. If the right be founded in this, that their parents are believers, then a person of fifty years old may claim this right for himself, with as much propriety as any could have challenged it for him when he was in a state of infancy.

We will suppose one case more, and one which frequently occurs: it is this. The parents of a family, at the age of about forty-five, are brought to embrace the gospel: they have children of every grade, from eight days old, up to more than twenty years. We wish to know whether they all are to be received to membership on their parents' account? If not, what age disqualifies them from coming? If they may be received on their parents' account at the age of twenty, we see nothing to forbid them at twenty-five, at thirty, at forty; yea, at any age while their parents live to support their claim. If the promise in the text gives any of the children of believers a right to membership without

repentance, or being called of God, it gives them all a right.

However absurd these things may appear, they are but the fair legitimate consequences of Mr. Edwards's argument. There is but one way for him honourably to clear himself, and that is, now to prove that *TEKNA* means only infants of a certain age, and not children generally. This we think he will find rather difficult.

His conclusion from the passage is, "that infants are placed in the same relation to baptism, as they were of old to circumcision." (p. 71.) That rite placed uncircumcised infants, and uncircumcised adults all upon one footing as to right. It also placed Abraham's servants upon the same level with his natural seed.

On the whole, this argument spun out of the promise made in the covenant of circumcision, is one of the most singular that we ever attempted to trace. It possesses certain elastic qualities, by which it is rendered capable of being extended or contracted, so as to suit the convenience of the person who uses it. Viewed in its fullest extent, and it proves the right of servants as well as children; in this it proves too much for the purposes of infant membership. Viewed in a limited sense, and it will support only the right of males; in this it proves too little, and of course makes no provision for females. Yet upon the whole, it proves just enough to secure the right of infants, both males and females, and no more.

Let us now for a moment review the passage, in order to ascertain the plain sense of the apostle. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, *every one of you*." That he did not mean infants is plain, from reason, and from Mr. Edwards's own concession; who says, that "faith and repentance are never required of infants, in order to any thing." But he required repentance of the same persons, that he called upon to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. To say, that he called on adults to repent and be baptized, and at the same time to bring all their impenitent children to the ordinance, appears to be a construction too unnatural and forced. The apostle adds, *And ye shall receive the*

*gift of the Holy Ghost.* If he included all the children of believers, did he engage the *gift of the Holy Ghost* to them all? For, saith he, *the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* Is it not plain to every one, that the last sentence is here designed as a limiting clause; and that there would be as much propriety in leaving it out in every instance, as in one? We ought either to read it thus—*The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off,* and so consider it as being universal; or else connect this limiting clause with each subject mentioned in the text. If the latter be true, it would be understood thus, *The promise is to you, who now appear to be true penitents; it will equally embrace your children, whenever they become penitent; and also the Gentiles who are afar off, even as many of all as the Lord our God shall call.* But no such thing as a promise to unbelieving children can be inferred from this passage. To suppose this, would be to make the apostle act the part of a god-father, and promise that these children should repent, and receive remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, &c. at some future period. We cannot believe that the apostle ever trifled in this manner.

Mr. Edwards attempts to get over the difficulty of this limiting clause in this way. “As the apostle, saith he, extends the promise beyond the *called* in the first clause, we must follow his example, and extend it beyond the *called* in the last clause—Thus the promise is to as many as the Lord our God shall call, *and to their children.*” (p. 79.) It does not appear that the apostle did extend the promise in the first clause beyond the *called*. There is no evidence that he meant to apply the promise to children upon any other principle than as he applied it to parents; namely, upon their repenting and being baptized. The promise would as naturally embrace impenitent parents as impenitent children. On the whole, this passage must be tortured, or it will not speak a single word in favour of infant baptism. Some very sensible and learned Pædobaptists



have given it up, as affording no argument in favour of their sentiment.

In what an undignified light does the scheme of our opponent represent the apostle Peter. On the memorable day of Pentecost—such a day as had never been since time began, and probably such an one as will never occur again while time lasts—the Holy Ghost sent down from the ascended Saviour! Peter standing in the midst of three thousand deeply distressed persons who were crying out, *What shall we do?* To this earnest inquiry, the holy apostle is represented in this very absurd light as telling them, “that infants are placed in the same relation to baptism as they were of old to circumcision.” (A subject which they made no inquiry about, and which we presume had not at this time come into their thoughts.) Had the apostle been as intent upon infant baptism as Mr. Edwards himself, we cannot suppose, at such a time and to such an inquiry, he would have given such an answer.

In the preceding animadversions, we have in a very brief manner examined Mr. Edwards’s pretended refutation of our arguments against infant baptism, and have endeavoured to show the inconclusiveness of his reasoning. In order to render his task more easy, he has attempted, at the very outset, to deprive us of those great advantages which the scriptures afford us in this controversy. But these will not be relinquished. He has also laboured abundantly to evade the force of these arguments, by endeavouring to embarrass and perplex them. But when disentangled from his sophistical web, they still appear correct and uninjured.

We have also considered the two leading arguments in his present system. In the first, he undertakes to prove, that “God has instituted in his church the membership of infants, and admitted them to it by a religious rite.” In his second argument, his object is to prove the continuance of this right of membership. From these taken together, he infers the right of infants to baptism in the gospel church.

We have attempted to show the inconclusiveness of the *first*, by proving that the Jewish and Christian

churches were not the same : That therefore no inference can be drawn from one to the other respecting any positive institution.

With reference to the *second*, we have endeavoured to show, that this right cannot be continued in consequence of that law which gave it existence, unless continued according to that law : namely, that a law obliging a parent to circumcise his male infants, cannot bind him to baptize them, both male and female. That whatever duties were enjoined by the Jewish dispensation belonged to that dispensation ; and that whatever duties are required by the gospel dispensation, are clearly and particularly enjoined by it, and not left to be inferred from any thing else. This is especially the case with whatever relates to positive institutions.

It will now be referred to the decision of the reader, whether we have not demonstrated, in a manner too plain to be denied, that the Christian church, collected under the personal ministry of Christ and his apostles, was entirely distinct from the Jewish church and independent of it. If so, all Mr. Edwards's arguments, founded on a contrary hypothesis, are unavailing. They prove nothing but his own inconsistency.

Having thus shown that these two arguments, which are the main pillars in Mr. Edwards's system, are both defective, and totally unable to sustain the superstructure raised over them ; we shall not trouble the reader at present with animadversions on his other collateral arguments, many of which are but mere ramifications of the same. It is evident, that on these he placed his main dependence. All his other arguments are designed only to corroborate and strengthen these. Yea, he tells us expressly, that "the whole defence of infants rests on two arguments. 1. That God did constitute in his church the membership of infants, and admitted them to it by a religious rite. 2. That the right of infants was never taken away." (p. 87.)

The first of these is admitted under certain qualifications with respect to the Jewish church. But even in this, infants were not generally admitted by any re-

ligious rite. It was only infants of a certain description who were thus admitted.

With regard to the second, should we admit the premises, we must deny the conclusion. For though this right had never been taken away, it would not belong to any other church than that to which it was given. If this be the foundation on which "the defence of infants rests," then it depends certainly on no new additional grant made under the gospel dispensation; of consequence, there can be no more in it now, than was originally in it. If the whole defence of infants rests on this, then no part of it can rest on any thing else. This privilege can no more be enlarged without some special act of the Lawgiver, than it can be wholly taken away and disannulled. Hence if this right remain at all, it must remain precisely in its instituted form, and no otherwise; unless some new law, making an important alteration, can be produced.

What effect Mr. Edwards's writings may have in establishing his Pædobaptist brethren, we pretend not to say; but we are persuaded that such "candid reasons" as he has offered, when stripped of their sophistical dress, will have little influence on the minds of real Baptists. We know of no one who has been brought by them to "renounce the principles of Anti-pædobaptism;" but on the contrary, several have been brought to embrace them. His reasonings have produced the same effects on others, which he informs his readers that Mr. Booth's did on him.

If what we have offered to the reader in the preceding pages be according to the oracles of truth, we pray the great Head of the church to succeed it for the comfort and establishment of such, as are seeking, or *contending for the truth*, and for the conviction of such as are advocating error.

## SECTION V.

**STRICTURES** on *Two Discourses on the Perpetuity and Provision of God's gracious Covenant with Abraham and his seed.* By SAMUEL WORCESTER, A. M. *Pastor of the Tabernacle Church in Salem.*

FOR the piety and talents of the Author of these discourses, we entertain sentiments of respectful esteem. And although we feel impelled to animadvert upon his writings, we shall still hold his person sacred. We do not blame him for endeavouring to defend his own sentiments, and guard his flock against what he considers to be error. But from his former professions of candour, we had no just reason to expect, that he would so far misrepresent our known and avowed sentiments, as to lead his readers to suppose, that we were destitute both of religion and common decency; that we "display our greatest zeal in making people believe, in too many instances, that going into the water will answer all the purposes of their present comfort, and of their eternal salvation." (Note, p. 73.)

Had Mr. Worcester contented himself, by proving to demonstration every iota of his own plan, without invading the right of others; his discourses might in all probability have passed down the stream of time unnoticed. Such an attempt would have given no reasonable offence to any man living. But when he digresses from this point, for the purpose of representing in an unfriendly light the sentiments and practice of a numerous body of Christians, who think they have at least equal pretensions to apostolical purity of sentiment, we must view it with the deepest regret.

The author of the discourses before us has commenced the attack; and if we do not mistake him, has implicitly invited us to the contest. If this be not his meaning, we think he has at least superseded the necessity of an apology on our part, if we test him by his own principles. The paragraph to which we refer is in the following words: "Any cause or doctrine which *shrinks* from the light of fair investigation, or will not endure

the test of scripture argument, certainly cannot be the cause of truth, nor a doctrine according to godliness. And those who will be offended or hurt by a fair and candid exhibition of argument, and vindication of sentiments in opposition to their own, give the greatest evidence that they are not contending, or concerned for the cause of truth, but only for the cause of a party." (p. 78.) The common adage says, "It is a poor rule that will not work both ways."

If Mr. Worcester meant to apply this to the Baptists, and suppose that they would shrink from a fair scriptural investigation of the subject in dispute, he may be assured he has mistaken the men whose sentiments he has attacked. No, let him and his brethren treat us in this way, and I believe they will not find us to "shrink from the light of fair investigation." Nor do we believe, that the Baptists "will be offended or hurt by a fair and candid exhibition of argument." But, if instead of this, he shall attempt to silence us by an oblique reference to the ghostly story of Münster, (which by the way we were no more concerned in, than we were in the *witchcraft in Salem*) or, to deter us from following the example of our blessed Redeemer, by the tales of a *Vossius*, of "naked men and women," he need not be surprised, if such arguments as these do not produce conviction. But even these shall be noticed in their proper place.

The discourses before us are founded on Gal. iii. 29. *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

The doctrine which the author adduces from the text is this: "In God's covenant of promise with Abraham, provision was made for the continuance of the church formed by it, and thus for the transmission of the privileges and blessings contained in it, from generation to generation, down to the close of time."

In order to illustrate this doctrine, Mr. Worcester first attempts "to show, that the covenant which was made with Abraham, and by which the church was formed in his family, was intended to be perpetual." By this covenant he evidently intends the covenant of circum-



cision ; for no other has ever been supposed to form Abraham's family into a church state. This conclusion is drawn not merely from the above statement, but from the whole tenor of his reasonings. That this is a fair statement, it is presumed, will not be denied.

We proceed therefore to consider this " candid exhibition of argument." And shall attempt, *first*, to prove, that Mr. Worcester has totally mistaken the *promise* in his text ; that the apostle referred to a *promise* entirely distinct from that from which he has reasoned.

*Second.* We shall attempt to show that his application of this promise to believers and unbelievers, or to believing parents and their unbelieving children, is unscriptural, and contrary to the apostle's reasoning throughout the context.

The reader will keep in mind that the promise made to Abraham and his seed in the covenant of circumcision, is the *datum* from which the author of these discourses reasons. In order to prove that he has mistaken his text, and reasoned from a promise not expressed nor intended by the apostle, we begin at the sixth verse, where the subject is particularly introduced in the context. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.* (verse 7.) *Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* (verse 8.) *And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, IN THEE SHALL ALL NATIONS BE BLESSED.* This is the promise, from which the apostle reasons throughout the chapter, But it must be observed, that this promise is not found in the covenant of circumcision, which is recorded at large in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis. By examining this, we shall find that the above promise is neither expressed nor contained in it by fair implication. The promise quoted by the apostle is in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, and third verse. This was made to Abraham at the time when he was called to leave his country and kindred, to go and sojourn in a strange land. The Messiah, in whom the nations were

to be blessed, was revealed in this promise. Hence the apostle calls this the *preaching of the gospel to Abraham*. This was probably the period also referred to by our Lord, when he said to the Jews, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.*\* On the above, a learned commentator makes the following remark: "The apostle quoteth the promise, Gen. xii. 3, where God tells Abraham, that in him all the nations (or families) of the earth should be blessed. This is to be understood of those spiritual blessings which are in Christ Jesus: for all the nations of the earth were no otherwise blessed in Abraham."†

This promise was made twenty-four years before the covenant of circumcision existed; and was as independent of that, as the covenant made with Noah respecting the drowning of the world. It did not depend at all upon the obedience of Abraham, or any other creature. It was in no sense conditional. The divine veracity was pledged for its fulfilment. And whether circumcision had been instituted or not, God would in the fulness of time have sent his Son into the world, and would have blessed the nations in him.

That this promise was made to Abraham twenty-four years before the covenant of circumcision, is proved from the following circumstances. 1. Abraham was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran, which was the time when this promise was made.‡ He was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised.§ See the margin.

Abraham received this promise, believed in its accomplishment, saw by faith the day of the Lord Jesus, and was justified through faith—all while he was in uncircumcision.|| Not one of these circumstances could have ever been altered, had that never been instituted. Nor does it appear that this promise was directly connected with, or included in that covenant. For notwithstanding it is there said, *a father of many nations will I make thee*; and although this might in a metaphorical sense allude to his being the father of be-

\* John viii. 56.

† Pool's Contin. in loc.

‡ Gen. xii. 4.

§ xvii. 1.

|| Vid. Rom. iv. 9, 10.

jevers in all nations ; yet it must be observed, that it stands immediately connected with the following words ; *And I will make thee exceeding fruitful ; and I will make NATIONS OF THEE, and kings shall come of thy loins.* These expressions, taken together, do not amount to a promise, that the nations which should spring from Abraham's loins, or any others should be blessed in him. It was not therefore descending from the loins of Abraham, but possessing his faith, which gave a title to the promise. The promise that he should be the *father of many nations*, and that *kings should come of him*, has been literally and fully accomplished.

The promise which respected the blessing of the Gentile nations in Christ, was renewed again to Abraham about twenty years after the covenant of circumcision. This was under circumstances peculiarly solemn : it was when he was called to offer up his beloved son Isaac. We have much reason to believe, that in this transaction, Abraham saw more of the mystery of redemption, through the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God, than he had ever seen before. The Lord now graciously condescended to comfort him, by repeating the promise which he made to him more than forty years before, with this variation ; *In thy SEED shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*

1. The apostle is particularly careful to distinguish this promise respecting the SEED in whom the Gentile nations should be blessed, from that made in the covenant of circumcision respecting the posterity of Abraham. The *woman's SEED*, who was to *bruise the serpent's head*, was also the SEED, promised to Abraham, in whom the believing Gentiles should be blessed. But primarily his natural seed, or at most his spiritual seed, and not Christ, was intended, by the seed in the covenant of circumcision. The nations have never been blessed in any other of Abraham's seed but Christ. 2. The apostle farther distinguishes the promise under consideration, in the sixteenth verse. *Now, saith he, to Abraham and his seed were the PROMISES made.* He speaks in the plural, "promises." In Gen. xii 3, it is said, *In THEE shall all families of the earth be blessed.* And in Gen. xxii.

18, it is said, *In thy SEED shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* That we might not mistake the latter, as referring to the promise made in the covenant of circumcision, and so to Abraham's natural seed, the apostle adds, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of ONE, and to thy SEED, WHICH IS CHRIST. The promises in the covenant of circumcision were to many; to Abraham's seed generally. Will any person presume to say that these promises referred to Christ, or were made to him; or that he was the seed there intended? Were kings to come out of his loins, and nations to be made of him? Was the land of Canaan promised to Christ for an everlasting possession? These were some of the promises made and fulfilled to Abraham and his natural seed. Christ claimed no interest in the land of Canaan: no, not so much as the foxes; for they had holes to burrow in, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. It will hence, we think, undeniably follow, either that the promises made to Abraham's seed in the covenant of circumcision referred to Christ, and had particular respect to him, or else that the apostle reasoned from a promise entirely distinct from them. 3. That the apostle did not refer to the promises in the covenant of circumcision, is further evident, from what he has said in the 17th verse: *And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

Here are several things worthy of consideration.

1. This covenant was confirmed of God in Christ. It consequently stood independent of the obedience either of Abraham or his posterity.

2. This covenant, if confirmed in Christ, could not be broken or disannulled. There could in the nature of things be no failure. Even a suspicion of this kind, would be derogatory to the honour and veracity of Christ.

3. This promise, which is the same referred to in the 29th verse, the apostle informs us was thus made and confirmed, four hundred and thirty years before

the giving of the law. This will forever distinguish it from the promises in the covenant of circumcision. For this was instituted only four hundred and six years before the giving of the law. The covenant in the xviith chapter of Genesis was in the year before Christ 1897. The law was given fourteen hundred and ninety-one years before the same era, which leaves but four hundred and six. See the margin.

But the promise quoted by the apostle from Genesis xii. 3, which was made to Abraham twenty-four years before, when he was in uncircumcision, exactly compares with this statement in the context, of four hundred and thirty years. This promise, according to the Bible chronology, was made to Abraham in the year before Christ, 1921. The law, as observed above, was given 1491, which makes exactly the time specified. See the margin.

Here the matter is reduced to mathematical certainty. Any person who will take the trouble to compare the dates in his Bible, of the xiiith chapter of Genesis, and the xxth of Exodus, referred to above, will feel himself completely satisfied. The most invincible prejudice will find it difficult to resist the light of demonstration.

If the observations which have now been made are correct, they will bring us unavoidably to this conclusion, viz. That Mr. Worcester has totally mistaken the promise in his text, and reasoned from one to which the apostle had no immediate reference. Hence the whole of his laboured superstructure is left without foundation! The fate of such a building may be seen in the close of the sixth chapter of Luke. In order to set aside this conclusion, three things must be fairly proved.

1. That the apostle throughout this chapter did actually mean the promise in the covenant of circumcision, although he has not mentioned a single passage contained in it; but expressly quoted one clearly distinguished by the time of its being delivered, and also by the terms and import of the promise itself.



2. It must be proved, that the covenant of circumcision was 430 years before the giving of the law, notwithstanding scripture chronology places it but four hundred and six.

3. That the *seed of Abraham*, mentioned in the covenant of circumcision, and the SEED in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, were the same : or in other words, that the seed of Abraham, expressed in that covenant, meant Christ ; for the apostle has expressly told us in the context, that he was the person to whom the promise, from which he was then reasoning, exclusively referred.

Until these are fairly proved, we shall insist upon the conclusion above stated. We have too good an opinion of Mr. Worcester's candour, to think that he will deny that he has reasoned from the covenant of circumcision throughout his discourses. If he can honourably extricate himself from the foregoing dilemma, he will undoubtedly do it ; and in doing it he will instruct the writer of these strictures, and probably relieve some of his brethren, who have, it is thought, already felt the difficulty.

We now proceed,

SECONDLY, to show, That the application of this promise to believers and unbelievers, or to believing parents and their unbelieving children, is unscriptural, and contrary to the apostle's reasoning throughout the context. The apostle predicates his reasonings upon two distinct topics, viz. upon Abraham's *faith*, and the *promise* made to him respecting the Gentile nations. With regard to the first, he saith, *Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. (Ver. 6, 7.)* Here it must be obvious to every unprejudiced mind, that Gentiles, whether young or old, cannot claim this relationship to Abraham, unless they *are of faith* : that is, unless they *believe God*, as Abraham did. Viewed in this character, as the "father of the faithful," and the same distinction will also apply with respect to his natural posterity. None of his seed are considered as his children in this sense, but such as *are of faith*. This distinction was made by

Christ himself, when reasoning with the pharisees, in the viiith of John. Feeling themselves pressed by his arguments, they fled to their common refuge, *We be Abraham's seed.* *Jesus answered them, I know that ye are Abraham's seed, but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. If ye were Abraham's CHILDREN, ye would do the works of Abraham.\** The works of Abraham comprehended both his faith and his obedience ; and for any one to claim interest in him as their father, until they are the subjects of saving faith in Jesus Christ, would be equally as unavailing as the claim of the *rich man*, who addressed *Abraham as his father*, but could not obtain a drop of water to cool his tormented tongue.†

We have already made some remarks on the 14th verse, but it comes in course to be considered more particularly. The apostle in the preceding verse makes this statement ; That “ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ.” Is it possible for any person to suppose, that by *the blessing of Abraham*, the apostle intended external church privileges ? such as the baptizing, and constituting children church members ? We cannot think these were the blessings expressed or intended by the apostle. For according to him, the blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles, *through Jesus Christ*, and through no other medium. But the blessing of infant baptism, and infant membership, comes on children through their parents : it depends altogether upon them, whether the children shall enjoy these blessings or not. But according to the apostle, *They which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham*, whether their parents are believers or unbelievers ; whether friends or enemies to the cross of Christ.

According to Mr. Worcester, if we understand him, the salvation of the children of believers depends principally upon the “ faith and fidelity” of their parents. His words are, “ The promise, then, to be a God to Abraham, and to his seed after him, was of this pur-

\* John viii. 33, 37, 39.

† Luke xvi. 24.

port, that on condition of faith and fidelity on Abraham's part, in respect to his children, they should become *subjects of grace*, and heirs of the blessings of the covenant. The same promise was made to Abraham's posterity, in their successive generations ; and the same is now made to all true believers, his adopted children of every nation."\* This doctrine, we believe, has been asserted by other Pædobaptist ministers, besides Mr. Worcester ; but we acknowledge freely that we have our doubts respecting its correctness. Will any one assert that all Abraham's own children were saved ? If not, will they venture to say it was owing to his want of *faith* or *fidelity* towards them ? Was Isaac distinguished by Abraham's faith and fidelity before he was conceived in the womb of Sarah, as the child of promise ? Or does it appear that Abraham ever exercised any pre-eminent faith or fidelity towards Isaac, more than towards Ishmael ?

If we descend a step further, into the family of Isaac, we shall see still clearer proof of the incorrectness of the sentiment under consideration. It is too evident to be denied, that Isaac had a partiality for Esau. It is also evident that his faith had fixed on him as the heir of promise ; for he intended, and actually thought he had given him the blessing. Yet *the purpose of God, according to election*, superseded both his "faith and fidelity," with respect to Esau, and gave the blessing to Jacob.

Will any one hazard the assertion, that Isaac had any different exercise of *faith* for Jacob, or manifested any *fidelity* towards him, which he did not towards Esau ? Or was it the sovereign pleasure of God alone, that made *Jacob the lot of his inheritance*, rather than Esau, totally independent of either the faith or fidelity of the pious parents ?

Throughout the chapter on which the discourses before us are founded, the apostle has asserted the personal interest of believers, and of no others in the blessing of Abraham. There is not a word of this *conditional business*, about the "faith and fidelity" of parents, by which their children become "subjects of grace :"

but, according to the apostle, both parents and children "become subjects of grace," only by becoming believers in Christ. This is being blessed with Abraham in some proper sense, and to some certain and valuable purpose.

There is also a very material difference with respect to the kind of faith with which the blessing of Abraham is connected. The apostle gives no intimation that he means any other faith, than that which is common to every believer : that is, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. But Mr. Worcester's faith, to which the promise of God is *conditionally* made, seems to be a faith respecting the salvation of our children. He reasons thus ; "Hence," faith he, "though in one respect the promises of the covenant are conditional ; yet in another they are not. Though in respect to individual believers, the promises are not absolute, but have respect to their *faith and fidelity as a condition* ; yet with respect to Christ, and the church as one with him, the promises are yea and amen. Though God is not by covenant absolutely engaged to give every believer that faith in the promises, respecting his children, which will certainly through grace, secure to his children, and all of them, the blessings of the covenant,"\* &c. This faith respecting children is entirely distinct from that faith by which Abraham and all other believers are justified : it is a kind of faith which probably few believers have ; which many never have, and which many never can have. A great proportion of believers are single persons, who have neither companions nor children ; and many who marry, live and die childless. None of these can be supposed to have this kind of faith. But we ask ; Has not the blessing of Abraham come on them through Jesus Christ ? Are they not *blessed with faithful Abraham* ?

We have no doubt but some believing parents have had strong faith given them respecting the conversion of their children ; or at least some of them, or possibly some of their neighbours, or *their* children. But it is equally evident, that many have been so happy as

to see their children brought to know the Lord, who were never sensible of any special faith concerning them in particular. On the other hand, it is reasonable to suppose, that that ardent desire which it is common for pious parents to feel for the salvation of their children, has led them to believe many things respecting them, which they never did, nor ever will realize.\*

Whatever faith parents may have respecting their children, it is certain they cannot give *them* faith, and consequently cannot convey the blessing of Abraham to them. This blessing rests on none but such as are themselves the subjects of faith ; on true believers only. This promise therefore cannot, consistently with the apostle's reasoning, be applied to children on the account of their parents' faith. If ever they receive the *blessing of Abraham*, it will come on them through *Jesus Christ* ; and they will rest in a most fatal delusion, if they rest in any thing short of this.

“ Vain are the hopes that rebels place  
Upon their birth and blood ;  
Descended from a pious race,  
Their fathers now with God.”

\* The instance of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, respecting his son, shall serve as a specimen. In February, 1744 (says Dr. Cillics) an event happened to him, which, amidst all his success, tended to keep him humble, and served to cure him of a weakness to which he had been liable, the trusting to groundless impressions. It was the death of his only child, concerning whom he was so impressed, that he made no scruple of declaring before the birth, that the child would be a son ; and that he hoped he would live to preach the Gospel. Several narrow escapes, which Mrs. Whitefield had during her pregnancy, confirmed him in his expectations ; which were so high, that after he had publicly baptized the child at the Tabernacle, all went away big with the hopes of his being spared to be employed in the work of God. But these fond expectations were soon blasted by the child's death, when he was about four months old. This was, no doubt, very humbling to the father ; but he was helped to make the wisest and best improvement of it. “ Though I am disappointed, says he, (writing to a friend) of a living preacher, by the death of my son ; yet I hope what happened before his birth, and since his death, has taught me such lessons, as if duly improved, may render his mistaken parent more cautious, more sober minded, more experienced in Satan's devices, and consequently more useful in his future labours to the church of God.”

\* *Memoirs of the life of the Rev. Geo. Whitefield.*



Whether their fathers are gone to heaven or not, religion is at all times a personal concern. The most pious parents cannot save their ungodly children. God declared by the prophet Ezekiel, that when he should send his judgments upon a sinful land, *though Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness. As I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters.\** These were three eminent saints; we should hence very naturally suppose, their children would derive as much advantage from their "faith and fidelity," as the children of saints in general: yet it seems that the children must have some personal religion, independent of their parents, to exempt them from even temporal judgments: how much more to secure them from the wrath to come!

The sentiment we have been contemplating respecting the promise of God made to Abraham, to his posterity, and to Gentile believers, to make their children "subjects of grace," on *condition* of their "faith and fidelity," involves, if we mistake not, another important error. It supposes, that every Gentile believer, who is the head of a family, stands in the same relation, and is entitled to the same promises that Abraham was. That every true believer is blessed with the same blessings of pardon and justification, with interest in the Messiah, the promised seed, will be readily admitted: but it does not hence follow, that the same promises are made to them respecting their posterity which were made to him. No, by no means; for this would constitute every believing head of a family, an Abraham; a patriarch of the church; a father of the faithful. Is there a Messiah to spring from every believing family? Are all the nations of the earth to be blessed in their seed? Does the promise of the land of Canaan descend to the children of believers, as it did to the children of Abraham? Has God promised any Gentile believer that his seed shall become numerous as the stars of heaven? That nations and kings shall spring from him?—All these questions must be answered in the neg-

ative. It will hence appear that by the special appointment of God, Abraham was placed in a situation different from all other believers ; and in this peculiar situation many things were promised to his seed, which are not promised to the seed of other believers.

But it will probably be said, we have mentioned every thing else but the promise itself, which contained Abraham's principal blessing, and which has been transmitted to Gentile believers, viz. That God promised to be a God to him, and to his seed. From the general tenor of the discourses before us, we conclude the author considered this as the promise referred to in his text. Hence, to be Christ's, is to be Abraham's seed, and heirs according to this promise : i. e. That God will be a God to us and our seed.

We trust it has been made sufficiently evident in the preceding pages, that this could not be the promise intended by the apostle ; and that whatever blessings were contained in this, that blessing of Abraham which is said to have come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, was a blessing distinct from this, and one which he enjoyed long before this covenant existed.

The question now to be determined is this, Does God stand engaged by covenant to every believer, to be a God to him and to his seed after him, in the same sense, as by that covenant he stood engaged to Abraham and his seed ? If a theory does not correspond with fact, it is a certain argument that it is not right. - We have already seen that a large proportion of believers die without issue. If this promise in its full force has been transmitted to them, it required, besides their "faith and fidelity," another *condition*, which the author of the discourses has overlooked. It must run to them and their seed, *provided they have any*. This promise, as it respected Abraham, did not require this condition ; for he had previously the promise of God, that his seed should become as the dust of the earth.

To give a correct view of what is contained in this promise, we shall quote the words of an excellent writer : " To ascertain the meaning of this promise, (saith he) we can proceed on no ground more certain than

fact. It is fact, that God in succeeding ages took the seed of Abraham to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all other nations; not only giving them 'the land of Canaan for a possession,' but himself to be *their God, King, or temporal Governor*. Nor was this all: it was among them that he set up his *spiritual* kingdom, giving them his lively oracles, sending to them his prophets, and establishing among them his holy worship; which great advantages were, for many ages, in a manner confined to them; and what was still more, the great body of those who were eternally saved previously to the coming of Christ, were saved from amongst them. These things taken together were an immensely greater favour than if they had all been literally made kings and priests. Such then being the *facts*, it is natural to suppose that such was the meaning of the promise."\*

\* Fuller's Expository Disc. on Gen. xvii. 7. To the above he subjoins the following note.

As an Antipædobaptist I see no necessity for denying that spiritual blessings were promised, *in this general way*, to the natural seed of Abraham; nor can it, I think, be fairly denied. The Lord engaged to do that which he actually did; namely, to take out of them, rather than other nations, a people for himself. This, I suppose, is the *seed* promised to Abraham, to which the apostle refers when he says, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the *seed*." (Rom. ix. 8.) By "the children of the promise" he did not mean the elect in general, composed of Jews and Gentiles, but the elect from amongst the Jews. Hence he reckons himself "an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, and the tribe of Benjamin," as a living proof that "God had not cast away his people whom he foreknew." Rom. xi. 1, 2.

But I perceive not how it follows from hence, that God has promised to take a people from amongst the natural descendants of believers, in distinction from others. What was promised to Abraham, was neither promised nor fulfilled to every good man. Of the posterity of his kinsman Lot, nothing good is recorded. It is true, the labours of those parents who "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," are ordinarily blessed to the conversion of some of them: and the same may be said of the labours of faithful ministers, wherever providence stations them. But as it does not follow in the one case, that the graceless inhabitants are more in covenant with God than those of other places, neither does it follow in the other, that the graceless offspring of believers are more in covenant with God than those of unbelievers. "New Testament saints have nothing more to do with the Abrahamic covenant, than the Old Testament believers who lived prior to Abraham."

I am aware that the words of the apostle in Gal. iii. 14, "the blessing of Abraham is come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ," are alleged

All this may be readily admitted, with respect to Abraham and his descendants ; but it does not prove that the same things are either engaged or fulfilled to Gentile believers. Their seed is not distinguished by any special acts of Divine Providence, as the seed of Abraham was. The uncircumcised might not mingle with the circumcised in the common acts of worship. But the dispensation under which we live, has no law forbidding the unbaptized, or even the irreligious from attending public worship with the saints. They are not compelled now to worship in the outer court, but may sit upon the same seats, and hear the precious gospel. Circumcision forbade the usual civilities of social life to the uncircumcised ; but this is not the case in Christian societies.

But should we admit this to be the promise intended in the passage, on which the discourses before us are founded, (which we shall by no means grant) and that

in proof of the contrary. But the meaning of that passage, I conceive, is not, that through Jesus Christ every believer becomes an Abraham, a *father* of the faithful ; but that he is reckoned among his *children* : not a *stock* on which the future church should grow ; but a *branch*, partaking of the root and fatness of the olive tree. So, however, the context appears to explain it—" They which are of faith are *the children* of faithful Abraham." ver. 7.

But if it were granted, that the blessing of Abraham is so come on the believing Gentiles, as not only to render them blessed as his spiritual children, but to insure a people for God from amongst their natural posterity, rather than from those of others ; yet it is not *as* their natural posterity that they are individually entitled to any one spiritual blessing ; for this was more than was true of the natural seed of Abraham. Nor do I see how it follows from hence, that we are warranted to baptize them in their infancy. Abraham, it is true, was commanded to circumcise his male children ; and if we had been commanded to baptize our males, or females, or both, or any example of the kind had been left in the New Testament, we should be as much obliged to comply in the one case, as he was in the other. But we do not think ourselves warranted to reason from circumcision to baptism ; from the circumcision of males to the baptism of males and females ; and from the circumcision of the children of a nation, (the greater part of whom were unbelievers) and of " servants born in the house or bought with money," to the baptism of the children of believers. In short, we do not think ourselves warranted in matters of positive institution, to found our practice on analogies, whether real or supposed ; and still less on one so circuitous, dissonant, and uncertain as that in question. Our duty, we conceive, is, in such cases, to follow the precepts and examples of the dispensation under which we live.

it has descended to Gentile believers in the fullest extent, yet we conceive that no fair inference can be drawn from it in favour of infant baptism. For the rituals of that dispensation were peculiar to it, and have now entirely ceased. The Gospel dispensation under which we live, has its own rituals totally unconnected, and independent of that. This will appear by this single circumstance, that the same persons who had been circumcised in infancy, under that dispensation, were baptized when they became believers. If, according to our opponents, infant baptism comes in the room of circumcision, we see no reason why they should not now be baptized when they become believers, as the Jewish converts were formerly. If, as is contended for, circumcision was a seal of the covenant, and baptism is a seal of the same covenant, why were they sealed over a second time? This was certainly *Ana*-sealing, which would look quite as inconsistent as *Ana*-baptism.

If the Jewish church and the Christian church are the same, where is the impropriety of calling the former the Gospel church, and the latter the Jewish? or in using the terms interchangeably, as may appear most convenient? Agreeably to this, some Pædobaptists have called their infant baptism "Christian circumcision." This is Judaizing with a witness. The language of Pædobaptist writers, and that of the writers of the New Testament, when compared together, will appear widely different on these points.

Mr. Worcester has so strangely blended different things, promised to Abraham at different times, that an incautious reader will be likely to mistake one for another. As a specimen of what may be found in various parts of the work, the reader will notice the following paragraphs.

"God's covenant of promise made with Abraham, comprised all the blessings and privileges ever promised to believers and the church."

"*I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee*, says the Lord to Abraham, *for an everlasting covenant*, TO BE A GOD UNTO THEE AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE." This is the most extensive



promise in the covenant of circumcision. But did this "comprise all the blessings and privileges ever promised to believers?" It certainly did not. Nor did Mr. Worcester feel willing to rest his assertion upon this; but has subjoined another promise made to Abraham long before the covenant to which he refers existed; and which was renewed to him, and to Isaac and Jacob afterwards. This promise he has given us in the following words, "AND IN THEE, AND IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED." (page 14.) This promise, indeed, comprises every thing, because it comprises the Messiah, the SEED in whom some of all nations shall be blessed. But this forms no part of the covenant of circumcision, though constantly blended in the discourses before us, as if it were one of the most prominent articles in it.

The author of these discourses seems to anticipate innumerable difficulties, on the supposition that the Gospel church commenced with the present dispensation. "If," saith he, "the covenant made with Abraham has been disannulled, and the church formed by it abolished; if, on the introduction of the Christian dispensation, a new church was formed, and a new covenant instituted, materially different from that made with Abraham; in what important respect can Abraham be considered as the father of Christian believers?" He further adds; "If we be members of a different church, formed by a different covenant from that of Abraham, what relation have we to Abraham? In what respect are we his children? How is it that we are blessed with him? that we are heirs according to the promise made to him?" (page 12.)

All these difficulties we think will be obviated and removed, by correcting a very essential error in his next paragraph. In this, if we mistake not, he has misquoted the Apostle's words, misapplied them, and made him give a very important conclusion, without any premises! "These," says the reader, "are charges of considerable magnitude: they ought therefore to be made out fairly, or retracted." We engage to do one or the other. The quotation to which we refer is

in the following words : “ *He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith*, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FATHER OF ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE, THOUGH THEY BE NOT CIRCUMCISED.” (page 12.) That the reader may better judge, we will give the paragraph entire.

“ But Abraham was made the father of many nations ; and all who are of faith *are* his children, and *are* blessed with him. This is according to the covenant of promise which God made with Abraham.” This is all very well, but he adds, “ *He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith*, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FATHER OF ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE, THOUGH THEY BE NOT CIRCUMCISED, though they be not his natural posterity, THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS MIGHT BE IMPUTED TO THEM ALSO.” If Mr. Worcester is correct, it was Abraham’s circumcision, and not his faith, which constituted him the father of believers !

The passage here referred to, is Rom. iv. 11. And we complain, 1. That the words are *misquoted*. To prove this, we need only compare them with the sacred text. Mr. Worcester says, “ *a seal of the righteousness of faith*, that he might be a father, &c.” The apostle says, *a seal of the righteousness of THE faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised*. Although the words *he had*, are not in the original, they are necessarily implied and understood, as in our translation. Had the words been quoted as they are read in our Bibles, they would have conveyed quite a different meaning. We do not insist that an author should always quote scripture verbatim, but if his variations give a different sense, he is certainly accountable for it.

2. We complain that the words are *misapplied*. They are applied as they stand in the Bible, only to Abraham. Circumcision was a seal to Abraham of his faith, but it is not said to be such to his posterity, or to any other person upon earth. Mr. Worcester has made it *a seal of the righteousness of faith* generally. What faith can it be supposed that an infant has of eight days old ? Was there any faith sealed to such ? What faith, was

sealed to a servant bought with money, who had been brought up in idolatry, and perhaps still attached to it, only compelled to conform to the religion of the Jews, because he was a slave? No man believes that either of the two were subjects of faith. How then, we ask, was circumcision a seal of the righteousness of faith to them? But it will be said, that God commanded them to be circumcised, and therefore it must have been right. With this we fully agree; but God has nowhere said that it was a seal of the righteousness of faith to them. A man may as well believe that every baptized infant is sealed with the righteousness of faith, though he may afterwards prove to be a profligate infidel, as that circumcision placed them in this privileged condition. He must give up his common sense to believe either. We therefore conclude, that if Mr. Worcester's words mean, what the same expressions mean when used by others, he has applied an expression generally, which the apostle applied only in a particular case; which we consider as a misapplication of the text.

3. We have charged Mr. Worcester, with making the apostle *conclude without premises*. This we are now to make out. In order to render it plain to every capacity, we will again set down his quotation. "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised." The apostle is here made to say, that Abraham was circumcised, so that he might be the father of believers that are uncircumcised! We ask, in the name of common sense, why it was necessary for Abraham to be *circumcised*, in order to constitute him the father of believers that are *uncircumcised*? If there can be any other meaning to the argument, as Mr. Worcester has placed it before the public, we confess we have not discernment enough to see it. But is it possible that the apostle should reason at this rate? He certainly did not. He is placed in this awkward situation only for the want of having his argument fairly presented. In order to see the force of his reasoning, the following words which begin the quotation, ought to be considered as a parenthe-

sis, as they really are, viz. (*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.*) The sense of the passage will then be plain. The apostle states his argument thus: *For we say, that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision, (and he received the sign, &c.) that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised.*" Here the argument resumes its native force, and teaches us that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness, when he was in uncircumcision; so that he might be the father of all other believers, though they be not circumcised. Not that he received circumcision, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE," as Mr. Worcester asserts (page 11) to qualify him to be the father of uncircumcised Gentile believers.

For what purpose, it may be asked, was the apostle's argument in this mutilated form introduced into the discourses before us? undoubtedly, to give force to the covenant of circumcision. If it were circumcision that constituted Abraham the father of believers, it would attach a degree of consideration to that rite, which it would not otherwise possess. In this way, it is thought to aid the cause of infant baptism. But we ask, was it not Abraham's faith which he had long before his circumcision, which, according to the apostle's argument, constituted him the father of the faithful? He being the first that submitted to that rite, might constitute him the father of *the circumcision*; but it was his FAITH that constituted him the father of believers.

It is conceived that the author of the discourses might with as much propriety have argued from this passage in his context:—*For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.*"\* It would be impossible here to see the propriety of this conclusion as it now stands before us: it is equally so in the one which Mr. Worcester has introduced above. But place this in its proper order, and it will also re-

\* Gal iii. 13, 14.

sume its native force. The argument stands thus. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us :* (for it is witten, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree :*) *that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.* The blessing of Abraham does not come on the Gentiles, because every one is cursed who hangeth on a tree ; but because Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law. So, neither was Abraham by being circumcised constituted the father of believing Gentiles who are uncircumcised ; but by believing God, and having faith reckoned to him for righteousness, when he was in uncircumcision. We now leave it with a candid public to determine, whether, in his zeal to support his hypothesis, Mr. Worcester has not entirely mistaken and misrepresented the apostle's argument, and finally drawn a conclusion favourable to his own scheme, but drawn it without any premises.

From Mr. Worcester's arguments thus corrected, we see nothing which leads to the conclusion that the gospel church (composed of professing believers only,) may not be considered as the *children of Abraham*, not by circumcision, but by faith, and completely *blessed in him* through Jesus Christ ; notwithstanding the covenant, which contained circumcision, and all the other Jewish rites, *has waxed old and vanished away.* If our relation to Abraham can be sustained on no better ground, than that we have had the seal of the covenant, as it is called, applied to us in our infancy, (whether by circumcision or baptism it matters not,) it will leave us in the same wretched condition of the unbelieving Jews. Let us not deceive ourselves by spending our efforts in defending the shadow, whilst we give up the substance.

*They which be of faith, faith the apostle, are blessed with faithful Abraham ; and they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. The scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the PROMISE BY FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is*



*neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female ; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* Every sentence which we have now quoted, seems to look with a forbidding aspect upon the membership and baptism of unbelievers. If the apostle had really designed to have barred the claim of infants, and all other unbelievers, he could scarcely have used language more decisive. He has first informed us that Abraham was blessed in believing God. He believed the gospel that was preached to him, concerning his seed, the Messiah, in whom *all families of the earth should be blessed*. This glorious promise has been fulfilling for ages ; and the blessing of Abraham still comes on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, and through no other medium.

The apostle is particularly careful to establish this point, that Abraham's *faith was reckoned to him for righteousness, when he was in uncircumcision*. By this he has excluded circumcision from claiming the smallest share of honour in the salvation of Abraham, or in his being the father of other believers. He appears equally cautious in discriminating the characters who are blessed with Abraham. His language is, *That God would justify the heathen through faith*. He adds, *So then, THEY WHICH BE OF FAITH are blessed with faithful Abraham*. Again, *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles THROUGH JESUS CHRIST*. We must find something more favourable to unbelievers than what is here expressed, or we shall be as unable to bless them, as Isaac was Esau, after he had given the blessing exclusively to Jacob.

Still to impress the sentiment more deeply, the apostle again resumes his subject towards the close of the chapter, and adds ; *For ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus*. Not by descending from Abraham, nor any other believer ; nor by any external rite whatever. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ*. This language agrees perfectly with the idea of their being all professors. But how a passive infant, of eight days old, can be said to *put on Christ*, to us is inconceivable. It might be said of such as are bap-

tized in infancy, that Christ, that is, his name is put upon them, without either their knowledge or consent; but how it can be rendered actively, *you have put on Christ*, is difficult to reconcile either to common sense or to truth. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; FOR YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS.* What! whole families! believing parents (at least one of them) and unbelieving children? saints and sinners, *all one in Christ*? Strange union indeed! *What communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?\**

If St. Paul were to address a modern congregation, where perhaps seven-eighths of them had been baptized in infancy, could he with propriety address them as he did these Galatian Christians: *As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ? Ye are all one in Christ?* Do Pædobaptist Christians themselves believe this of their families? Do they believe that their baptized but unregenerate children have put on Christ? That they and their children of this description are all one in Christ Jesus? They certainly do not treat them as if they believed any such thing; nor can we suppose they do seriously believe it. Yet if they do not believe it, will they not feel this conviction, that their churches differ essentially from those in the apostolic age? As the apostles themselves did not profess to know the hearts of others, the language addressed to the Galatians, would be proper to any body of baptized professors who acted in character as Christians.

It only remains here to observe a few words upon the text itself. *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

We have already seen that the promise here mentioned did not refer to the covenant of circumcision, but to a previous promise made to Abraham, and confirmed of God in Christ. We have also seen that believers only, or such as are *of faith*, are considered as partaking in the blessings of that promise. But if there were nothing in the context to determine us with re-

\* 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

gard to the subject, one would suppose that the text itself speaks a language irreconcilable to the doctrine of infant baptism.\* *If ye be Christ's*; this determines our title to the blessing. This determined the title of our ancestors, and this will determine the title of our children. But the author of the discourses has advocated a sentiment exceedingly different from this: it implies the following; *If ye parents, one or both of you, be Christ's, then are ye, and all your children, Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* But it will be asked, In what sense can unconverted Gentiles be considered as the children of Abraham? What promise has God ever made to Abraham of spiritual blessings, that unconverted Gentiles may claim, by right of heirship? The answer must be, None at all.

Indeed it is believed that Mr. Worcester himself has fully conceded this very point, notwithstanding all his laboured arguments to prove that the baptized children of Gentile believers are Abraham's seed. His words are, "To become entitled then to the blessings of the covenant, Abraham must walk before God, and be perfect; must have TRUE FAITH, and be *sincerely obedient*. This was necessary as it respected himself personally, and *equally necessary as it respected his children.*" (page 36.) If "true faith" was necessary to entitle Abraham and his children to the blessings of the covenant, is not the same necessary for us and our children? This perfectly agrees with the language of the apostle in the text, as we understand him. *If ye be Christ's*, that is, have "true faith" in him, *then are ye Abraham's seed, &c.* No Baptist, we believe, ever disputed but that all such, whether young or old, as have *true faith* in Christ, are Abraham's spiritual seed, and heirs according to the promise, that all nations should be blessed in his SEED. It appears to us, that many of our

\* This text stands so sentimentally opposed to infant baptism, that it has been a little surprising that Mr. Worcester should choose it as the foundation of his discourses. He must, we conceive, have thought it more friendly to his subject than it appears to us: for we are unwilling to suppose he chose it upon the principle which *Socrates* is said to have chosen one of his wives, the noted *Xantippe*, (one of the frowardest women in the world) i. e. *to show his skill in managing her.*

Pædobaptist brethren mistake the subject on this ground, That the promises which were made to Abraham, which respected his *spiritual seed only*, they apply indiscriminately to the natural seed of Gentile believers.

In the ninth of Romans it is said, *They are not all Israel who are of Israel ; neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children. They who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God : but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.\** Are not the children of Gentile believers, *children of the flesh*, as really as others ? If so, the apostle has decided the point, that they are not the children of God, nor the seed of Abraham : *for the children of the promise are counted for the seed.* By these we think no person can doubt, but the apostle meant spiritual persons, as distinguished from the children of the flesh. This perfectly corresponds with the general tenor of the scriptures. This will also assist us in determining who are intended by Abraham's seed in the text.

On the whole, we cannot perceive that a single blessing is promised to any unbeliever, throughout the whole chapter on which the discourses are founded. We therefore conclude, that the author, in applying them to believing parents, and their unbelieving offspring ; and by endeavouring to prove, that they are all *Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*, has applied them in a sense, which neither the scriptures in general, nor the apostle's reasoning throughout the context, will justify. The reader will judge, whether the preceding reasoning will support this conclusion or not.

It will be remembered, that we proposed in the beginning of these strictures to attempt the proof of two points :

1. That Mr. Worcester had mistaken the promise in his text, and reasoned from one totally different from the one which the apostle reasoned from.

2. We proposed to show, that his application of the promise to believers and unbelievers, or to believing parents and unbelieving children, was unscriptural, and contrary to the apostle's reasoning.

\* Rom. ix. 6—8.

On the first, we have shown, that the promise quoted by the apostle was distinct, in its *nature* and *design*, from the one on which the discourses are founded; and that the time at which it is stated to have been given, will not agree with the covenant of circumcision.

On the second, we have shown, that by the apostle's reasoning in the context, and other scriptures, the blessing of Abraham is annexed only to faith: That it comes on Gentile believers individually, and not otherwise: That parents, by faith in Jesus Christ, may enjoy the blessing of Abraham, while their unbelieving children lie under all the miseries of the curse: That the blessing of Abraham comes on believing children, *through Jesus Christ*, and not through their parents: That they are not saved by their parents' faith, but by their own.

If the two preceding points have been demonstrated, it is all that we undertook. We do not pretend to have considered all Mr. Worcester's arguments, nor to have exposed all his errors. Our limits forbid that we should enlarge on this part of the subject. We have conscientiously endeavoured not to misrepresent his sentiments; if it should be found, in any instance, to be the case, it will be sincerely regretted when pointed out.

May the Spirit of the living God, that Spirit which was promised by Jesus to his disciples, discover to each of us his errors, by *leading us into the truth*. And may we be always ready to receive the truth, whenever it is presented to our minds, although it may cross our preconceived opinions. If we love the Lord Jesus Christ, we are solemnly bound to keep his commandments. In order to this, we must be willing to know what they are, and how they are to be observed. And let us see to it, that we do not make void his commandments through our tradition.

To the tribunal of public opinion, the preceding remarks are cheerfully submitted. And were it not for some charges particularly brought against our denomination in the discourses before us, we should here take



our leave of them ; but, under present circumstances, we should be wanting to ourselves, not to attempt a vindication. We must therefore ask the reader's patience a little longer, hoping that he will candidly attend to what we have to say to the things laid to our charge, and then judge whether they ought to be placed to our account or not.

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## SECTION VI.

*The Baptists vindicated from the Charges brought against them by the Rev. Samuel Worcester.*

TO reprove a Christian brother, and to do it in the temper of the gospel ; and especially, when we feel ourselves injured by the faults which call for reproof, is by no means one of the least difficult duties of our holy religion.

If the things of which we are about to complain had emanated from avowed enmity, or had been vociferated only by the tongue of slander, they had never excited any other emotions in our minds, than pity and silent contempt : but when they are uttered upon the public, as undeniable facts, and sanctioned too by all the gravity of the pulpit, they assume a very serious and dangerous aspect, and imperiously call us to self-defence.

Our limits will not allow us to animadvert on all that Mr. Worcester has said against us ; and even the few articles which we do touch upon, we are obliged to handle with great brevity.

Without particularly noticing several preceding remarks, in which he probably aimed his shafts at the Baptists ; yet, as he neither named, nor hit any one, we shall proceed to what is directly applied to us.

1. In a note, page 23, we are charged with imbibing the error of the old "legal Jews," by *unscripturally blending* the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham, and what is called the Sinai covenant, together.

This charge comes rather with an ill grace, from a man, who has, throughout the discourses before us, constantly blended the promises of the covenant of circumcision, with the promise of the Messiah, made to Abraham, years before that covenant existed. From this "unscriptural blending" of these two covenants, which in their nature are every way distinct, it is thought, he has given the chief plausibility to his arguments, which they possess. Had he confined himself to the covenant of circumcision, he could not with propriety have inferred those great blessings, which come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ, under the gospel dispensation.

But if Mr. Worcester has done wrong, in blending two covenants which are really distinct, it will by no means exculpate the Baptists, if they have been guilty of the same. How far this charge can be supported we know not. Had it been accompanied by the words of the writers referred to, we could more readily have judged of its accuracy. This would also have given the persons implicated, if living, an opportunity to have vindicated themselves. But it now rests upon the denomination at large.

In reply, we can only say, we know of no writer on our side of the controversy, who has blended the covenants referred to, any farther than the scriptures have blended them. What Mr. Worcester and other Pædobaptist writers call the *Sinai covenant*, wants defining. They sometimes speak of it in such a way as would naturally lead us to suppose, they meant the ten commandments, or moral law. But surely these commands are not abolished? The moral precepts of that law given from Sinai can never be abrogated. If by the Sinai covenant, they mean what the apostle calls, *The law of commandments contained in ordinances*;\* we ask, Was not circumcision blended with these ordinances? Yea, was not this the principal article which occasioned the "enmity" between Jews and Gentiles, which Christ by the Gospel dispensation and by his death abolished? That circumcision was blended with the ritual of Moses, is clear from the words of Christ to

\* Eph. ii. 15.

the Jews. *Moses therefore*, said he, *gave unto you circumcision* (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers) *and ye on the sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the LAW OF MOSES SHOULD NOT BE BROKEN; are ye angry, &c.* "The unscriptural blending of these two covenants together, says Mr. Worcester, has been a most prolific source of error. From this source sprang the error of the legal Jews, in former ages; and from the same source has sprung the error of the Antipædobaptists, in modern times." He further adds; "It was with his eye upon this source of error, that our Lord, when in discourse with the Jews, he took occasion to mention circumcision, the original seal of the Abrahamic covenant, was particular to remind them, that *it was not OF MOSES, BUT OF THE FATHERS.*" How Mr. Worcester came by his information, that Christ had his "eye upon this source of error," we know not. We can see nothing in the context to justify such an opinion. Christ, in vindicating himself for having healed a man upon the sabbath-day, adverts to their conduct in circumcising the child which might happen to be eight days old on the sabbath. This was certainly according to the law of Moses,\* and it was certainly according to the law given to the fathers.† How then does it appear that they were in an error about circumcising the child on the sabbath? It does not appear at all. Their error did not lie in this, but in condemning the Saviour for doing a deed which no more militated with the law of the sabbath, than circumcising the child.

But if these covenants were so distinct, how came Mr. Worcester himself to blend them? He considers the Sinai transaction a renewal of the former covenant. His words are, "At Mount Sinai, the Lord appeared in terrible and glorious majesty, and, recognizing the ransomed tribes as the seed of Abraham, *renewed with them his covenant*; and gave them a code of statutes and ordinances, called also a covenant, which were to continue until the Messiah should come," &c. What Mr.

\* Lev. xii. 3.

† Gen. xvii. 30.

Worcester here calls a renewal of the covenant; if he refers to Exodus xix. 5—8. we think most likely to be the covenant which the prophet Jeremiah had in view, which he said *God made with their fathers* in the day that he took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, *which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord.* The Jews were very tenacious of the law or ritual of Moses. They adhered to this long after they had lost the spirit of obedience. But whether it were this, or the *law of commandments contained in ordinances*, circumcision was connected with both. And if circumcision was not contained in the *band writing of ordinances*, which Christ *blotted out, and nailed to his cross*, we think it may be difficult to prove, that it has ever been abolished. We do not suppose from this, that any absolute promise which God ever made to Abraham, or any other person, has ever been abolished. Conditional promises, such as Mr. Worcester tells us those were which respected the salvation of Abraham's seed, and the seed of other believers, can be obligatory upon the promiser, only by the conditions being fulfilled. And as he has stated these conditions, it does not appear that either Abraham or Isaac, or any of their posterity ever fulfilled them. If they failed, we seriously doubt whether any other believer has ever complied with them fully: at least, it wants proof.

In all denominations, some men differ in opinion from others, and some have errors which it would be ungenerous to charge upon the whole: but we think we are authorized to say, that the Baptists believe, that every promise which God made to Abraham respecting his natural seed has been, or will be fulfilled, in case the conditions on their part are fulfilled; but that the promises secured to Abraham by covenant respecting the Messiah, and the blessing of the nations in him, *remain unaltered.* These promises, which include all Abraham's spiritual seed, are absolute. They are in Christ Jesus; and in *him they are yea and amen.* We conceive, that it no more depended on Abraham's faith whether the Messiah should spring from him, or whether the na-

tions should be blessed in the promised seed, that is, in Christ, by believing the gospel, than it did, whether Christ should rise from the dead on the third day.

But has not the author before us drawn a little from this “prolific source,” and blended two other covenants which are manifestly distinct? We mean the covenant of circumcision, and the new covenant mentioned in the prophecy of Jeremiah.\* Speaking of the latter, he says, “This is called, indeed, a new covenant, and on this account has sometimes, for want of proper attention to the subject, been supposed to be different from any covenant before established with the church. It is called a *NEW covenant*, because of its revival and renewal after it had been for a long time greatly obscured,” &c. (page 18.) But after all his ingenious labour to prove his point, he has failed; and in the very next page, with much seeming reluctance, conceded to an important difference. Speaking of the new covenant, he says, “In the last instance, indeed, there is an *intimation of a renewal of heart*, in those with whom the covenant is established.” “*An intimation*,” Sir; is this all? Is there not a positive, solemn engagement? This is an article, which must forever distinguish this new covenant. “An intimation of a renewal of heart!” We could not have believed, had we not seen it from his own pen, that the “Pastor of the Tabernacle Church in Salem,” could ever have spoken with such cold indifference of the work of the Holy Ghost in renewing the heart.

That we have properly “attended to the subject,” we presume not to say; but this we are free to declare, that it appears to us, that God himself has distinguished this covenant not only from the one contrasted with it, but from all others which preceded it. Mark the language!—*The days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a NEW COVENANT; not revive an old one. I will put my laws in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.* This is not the tenor of any former covenant. Is there any such engagement in that of which circumcision was the

\* Jer. xxxi. 31, 32.



seal? The sign of that covenant was outward, in the flesh. Thousands had this sign, which in these discourses is called the *seal of the righteousness of faith*, who never, as we have any reason to believe, had any true faith. In this new covenant, *all know the Lord, from the least to the greatest*. A vast proportion of those who were interested in the covenant of circumcision, and had that seal put upon them, we must conclude, if we believe the scriptures, never knew the Lord. To say the least, this covenant is quite as distinct from the Abrahamic covenant, as that was from the covenant which God made with the Israelites, when he took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt.

2. Another charge, though not the next in order, which Mr. Worcester has exhibited against the "Anabaptists," as he very fastidiously calls us, is so closely connected with this, that we proceed next to consider it.

"They deny, saith he, God's everlasting covenant of superabounding grace, the grand charter of the inheritance and privileges of his people, the source of blessings to all the kindreds of the earth." (page 78.)

If there were any law in force to burn heretics, I know not, my brethren, how we should feel to have such a charge as this fulminated against us; but as things now are, I am inclined to think, we shall be able to meet it with a good degree of calmness.

But on what is this dreadful charge founded? The writer has not condescended to inform us; he has made the assertion, and gone on his way. He has left us to gather his meaning from the general tenor of the discourses before us. From these we are led to suppose he must refer to our not allowing, that the covenant made with Abraham, which obliged him to circumcise all the males born in his house and bought with money, obliges Gentile believers to baptize their infants, both male and female. This we do not believe: we cannot believe it. But is this full proof, that we "deny God's everlasting covenant of superabounding grace?" We can by no means admit it. Our consciences bear us witness, that we do not knowingly deny any covenant which God has revealed in his word; nor do we feel

any other conviction in our minds from this terrible charge, than of the mistaken zeal of its author. No, we have ever acknowledged "God's everlasting covenant" which contained the promise of the Messiah, the only "source of blessings to all the kindreds of the earth." We must therefore view with the deepest regret, a declaration so evidently unfounded; a declaration peculiarly calculated to inflame the passions, and increase the unhappy prejudices of those who differ from us.

Nor is it true, that we deny what is called the "Abrahamic," or covenant of circumcision. We think we acknowledge it in its full extent, as stated by the inspired writers, as really as our brethren do. It is true, we do not acknowledge all the inferences they draw from it. But is this denying the covenant itself? Might we not with as much propriety charge them with a "denial" of the ordinance of baptism, because they do not comply with our views of it, as for them to charge us with denying God's covenant, because we understand it differently from themselves?

Some of our reasons for disbelieving that Gentile Christians are under the covenant of circumcision, as the seed of Abraham were, are founded on the result of the first Christian council, stated in the xvth of Acts, as may be seen in what follows.

When certain men were come from Judea to Antioch, they taught the brethren, who were Gentile believers, that except they were *circumcised after the manner of Moses*, they could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas withstood them, but could not convince them. It was finally concluded to send a deputation to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. And after much consultation this was the result: *For it seemed good to the HOLY GHOST, and to us, to lay on you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*

By the result of this council, we see circumcision totally given up, as it respected the Gentiles, and no

substitute named in its room. Had there been but a few Pædobaptists in that council, it is thought they would have settled the business at once. How easily they might have stopped the mouths of those sticklers for circumcision ! It would have been only to have used the modern argument, that baptism is placed in the room of circumcision. That as they used to circumcise their children, (that is, the males) they had need only to baptize them. It is perfectly unaccountable that Paul and Barnabas, while contending at Antioch against circumcision, should never once think of this argument. Paul was certainly a very acute reasoner. In general we find him to have fully comprehended his subject, and also to have availed himself of the best topics of argument. He seems in this instance to have neglected the only rational ground of defence. But is it not passing strange, that not one in the council, which was composed of nearly all the apostles and elders of the Christian church, should ever once have mentioned the only argument which would have satisfied or confounded their opponents ? You cannot now talk with a Pædobaptist five minutes on the subject, but he will tell you, " baptism came in the room of circumcision." There never was a case which more urgently called for this argument, nor when it might have been used with greater prospect of complete success. How can we account for its omission ? In one way, we conceive, and in one only : it had then probably no existence.

Had this argument been brought forward in that council, it must have produced the happiest effects. It would have cut like a two-edged sword ; for it would not only have stilled those Judaizing Christians, who were clamouring about circumcision, but would also have silenced every objection which any Antipædobaptist could have raised.

We wish here to ask one question, and leave it with our Pædobaptist friends to answer ; and we hope they will answer it conscientiously, in the fear of God. Should a number of the descendants of Abraham, at the present day, embrace the gospel, and embody into a church state, after which a number of Gentile believers

should propose to unite with them ; but in order to this union, they should insist upon their being *circumcised after the manner of Moses* : should both parties agree to refer their difficulties to a council, to be composed wholly of Pædobaptists,—we wish to ask, whether they do not think that their principal argument with these believing Jews would be, “ that circumcision had been superseded by baptism ? ” Or, in other words, “ That they were now to baptize their infants, instead of circumcising them ? ” We wish not to anticipate their answer any farther than just to say, that should they not avail themselves of this argument, they would reason very differently with them, from what they do with us. Answer it as they may, they must, we think, either differ from themselves, or from the council at Jerusalem.

We beg the reader's indulgence here, while we digress a few moments from our subject, to answer an objection which has often been brought by Pædobaptists, against giving up circumcision without a substitute. They have constantly argued, that the Jews were so tenacious of this privilege for their children, that they would never have peaceably resigned it, without something in its room ; and yet it has often been said, that there was never any dispute about it. Mr. Edwards, reasoning upon this very point, has the following remarks : “ If,” saith he, “ we take into consideration the character of those persons, among whom this custom had prevailed, and among whom it is supposed to have ceased, we shall have sufficient reason to think it impossible, that a custom of this nature should be abrogated, and *they not oppose a single word.*” \* Will not the reader ask, Had Mr. Edwards never read the xvth chapter of Acts ? Had he never observed that the very first difficulty in the Christian church which required the intervention of a council, was occasioned by a contention raised about circumcision by certain Jewish believers ? We see nothing in the scriptures to justify the opinion, that the Jews were tenacious of this privilege, any otherwise, than as they considered it an ordinance of

\* Cand. Reas. p. 68.

God, which they were bound to observe on pain of the divine displeasure. It appears to us, that Pædobaptists rate the privilege much higher than ever the Jews did. Peter certainly considered it as a yoke, and a grievous one too; which neither *their fathers nor they were able to bear.*

It seems to be generally concluded by Pædobaptists, that the only reason why the believing Jews made no difficulty about the abrogation of circumcision, was, that infant baptism was substituted in its room. But if other Jewish believers viewed it as Peter did, *as a yoke*, is it not probable, when they were brought into the pure liberty of the gospel, they would be willing to dispense with such a yoke of bondage?

We wish the reader seriously to consider the two following observations:

1. That the apostles had continually to contend with Judaizing Christians, on the subject of circumcision, although Mr. Edwards and others will not allow that they “opposed a single word.”

2. That in all the instances in which the apostles had to oppose the advocates for circumcision, they never once made use of this argument, that the baptism of infants was substituted in its room.

Both of these remarks will be confirmed by a careful examination of the following scriptures: *Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses ye cannot be saved.\* Thou seest, brother, how many thousand of the Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying, that THEY OUGHT NOT TO CIRCUMCISE THEIR CHILDREN.†* See also the apostle’s exhortation to the Galatians: *Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that IF YE BE CIRCUMCISED, CHRIST SHALL PROFIT YOU NOTHING.‡* To the Philippians he saith, *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision, &c.§* And to Titus,

\* Acts iv. 1, 5.

† Acts xxi. 20, 21.

‡ Gal. v. 1, 2.

§ Phil. iii. 2.



*There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, ESPECIALLY THEY OF THE CIRCUMCISION ; whose mouths must be stopped ; who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.\**

Can any man seriously consider these passages, with many others of the same import, and then conclude, that the Jews made no difficulty about giving up circumcision? that they did not "oppose a single word?" We should think, that we were only *beating the air* to reason with such a man.

If our reasonings on this head should produce no other effect, will they not exonerate us from the unchristian charge, that we "deny God's everlasting covenant?" Feeling ourselves acquit, we leave the author to answer it to his God, and to his conscience.

3. "They deny (saith he) the church of God, which was formed in the family of Abraham," &c.†

How has Mr. Worcester proved this? How! by his own assertion, as he has the most of his other charges. We are obliged to find out his meaning, if we can, from the general drift of his discourses. As this charge immediately follows the one we have just been considering, it is probably drawn from the same premises. And in answer to it we need only say, we are not conscious of denying any thing respecting the "church formed in Abraham's family," which the scriptures establish, or which reason requires us to believe. We know of nothing on which the charge can be founded, but what has been obviated under the preceding article, unless it be this; that we do not believe the gospel church to be a mere continuation of the old Jewish, but a spiritual house built up of lively stones. We conceive the charge, therefore, as unfounded as it would be to charge us with denying that Great Britain, with which we were once connected, was a lawful government, because we are not now under it, but enjoy different and greater privileges, under a different constitution.

Without "displaying any thing like a spirit of persecution, or even of uncharitableness," (see page 78,) Mr. Worcester proceeds to say,

\* Tit. i. 10, 11.

† Ibid.

4. "The grand provision, which, in his infinite wisdom and grace, Jehovah has been pleased to make for the preservation of a righteous seed upon earth, and for the maintenance and promotion, from age to age, of his cause and kingdom in this hostile world, *they not only deny, BUT OPENLY CONTEMN.*" Is it not a profanation of language to talk of "charitableness" towards any sect of professing Christians, and at the same time to charge them not only with *denying, but openly condemning* the grand provision which God has graciously made, for the promotion of his cause and kingdom in the world? This charge, however, appears to us so totally unfounded, and so far from that spirit of meekness, which the love of Christ inspires, that we shall attempt no other vindication, but a solemn appeal to facts, and to the feelings of our fellow-men. Let those, who are best acquainted with our sentiments, with our doctrine, with our daily conversation and practice, testify, if they think us the *open deniers* and *contemners* of the provision which God has made for the "promotion of his cause and kingdom in the world." Let the thousands in America, whom God has graciously condescended to convert by our ministry, testify, if they have ever seen any thing in our conduct towards themselves or others, which could justify such a charge. Let the converted Hindoos of Hindostan declare, if they think the men who have left their friends, their country, and almost every enjoyment held dear by civilized man, to publish in those benighted regions the precious name of a Saviour: let these testify, if they have seen any thing in them, which looks unfriendly to the promotion of the cause of God in the world. Although we have much reason to lament the languor of our zeal in this precious cause, yet our consciences bear us witness in the sight of God, that we love and pray for its prosperity; and whilst thus unjustly charged, we think we can rejoice, that *our judgment is with the Lord, and our work with our God.\**

5. The author of the discourses, still continuing his strain of accusation, adds—"They *deny and condemn* the grace which is so kindly and so condescendingly offered

\* Isa. xlix. 4.

for the spiritual renovation and everlasting salvation of the seed of the church." (page 79.)

An inquisitive mind, if permitted, would naturally ask two or three questions upon this article. Do not the scriptures consider the church as *the bride, the Lamb's wife*, and the SAVIOUR himself as the *Bridegroom*? What *seed* then has the church, that are not "renovated?" Has the church, properly speaking, any children but spiritual ones? What *grace* is that so "kindly offered," which the Baptists "deny and contemn?" And to whom is it offered? to parents for their children, or to children for themselves? We know of no other grace, nor can we conceive of any which the author can have reference to, but the *grace of infant baptism*. We know of nothing which distinguishes the children of Pædobaptists from the children of other believers, only their baptism. It will be admitted, that there are unworthy professors in all denominations, from whom it would be improper and disingenuous to form a judgment of the whole. But it is not perceived, that Pædobaptists in general discover any more solicitude for the eternal salvation of their children, than what is apparent in other Christians. Do they more generally restrain them from the vanities of the world? Or do they pray more frequently, or more fervently for them than others? They may indeed present their supplication upon a different footing from what the Baptists do. They may plead their covenant relation to God; that *they have Abraham to their father*: whereas others have nothing to plead for theirs but the merits of a Saviour, or what is called "the uncovenanted mercy of God." An observation made by Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, may cast some light upon the subject. *What advantage then, said he, hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.\** If to enjoy the oracles of God was the *chief advantage* which the circumcised Jew had above others; and "baptism places children in the same relation to the church as circumcision did," it will be difficult, we believe, to point out any great advan-

\* Rom. iii. 1, 2.

tages, which the children of Pædobaptists enjoy, which are not equally enjoyed by others. The oracles of God, as far as we know, are as freely and fully enjoyed by the children of the Baptists, as by any others. St. Paul, in another of his epistles, gives us his opinion of the real value of all the privileges to be derived from the covenant of circumcision. *Though I might also, faith he, have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh he hath whereof he may trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, &c. But what things were gain to me I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.\** We very much doubt, whether any persons who were ever truly humbled before God, under a sense of their guilt and unworthiness, then felt as if they had any thing to plead but pure mercy. All their self-exalting schemes, founded upon their supposed covenant relation to God, at once disappeared, and those things which before they had reckoned upon as entitling them to divine favour, *they counted but dung, that they might win Christ.*

The following, sounds very different to us, from the style of the New-Testament writers, viz. *Conditional promises* to parents, by which their children may or may not become "subjects of grace." (page 38.) "Grace so kindly offered to *us* for our children." (page 77.) And "grace offered for the spiritual renovation of the *seed* of the church." (page 79.) This language is about as unintelligible to a Baptist, as that was to Nehemiah, which was spoken by the children of those Jews who had married wives of Ashdod, &c.† We hence leave it to those who can better understand it; and proceed to his next charge.

6. "The great body of God's visible professing people, even the MOST ENLIGHTENED, and the MOST FAITHFUL, for hundreds of years, they utterly set aside,

\* Phil. iii. 4, 5, 7, 8.

† Nehemiah xiii. 23, 24.

as constituting no part of the true church of Christ, but only a part of Antichrist."

We very much regret, that Mr. Worcester should throw out such an unqualified charge, without producing a scrap of proof to support it. Can we suppose, that he seriously believed this to be the sentiment of the Baptists in general? If so, we shall still regret, that he has undertaken to represent to the world, or rather to misrepresent the sentiments of a people, which he knows so little about.

Could any thing be produced from the writings of an individual, which might seem to bear hard upon the visibility of the Pædobaptist churches, this alone would not prove it to be the general sentiment of the denomination. Do not the printed works of the Baptists, from time immemorial, abundantly show that they hold no such sentiment?

The writer of these sheets thinks it incumbent on himself, in this place to declare, that as far as he has been able to understand the sentiments of his own denomination, both in Europe and America, they never have denied that Pædobaptists were visible Christians; that a number of them united together, may be considered as a visible church; and that a minister regularly placed over them, may be a visible minister of Christ. Yet they consider them, individually and unitedly, in an error with respect to baptism: that so far as their visibility depends on baptism, so far it is defective. We think we can say, in the sincerity of our hearts, that we unfeignedly love our Pædobaptist brethren, who appear to walk in the spirit of the gospel; and are determined to treat them as Christians; but as Christians whom we view in an error, as expressed above, notwithstanding the hard things they are saying of us. If Mr. Worcester can make out, that our denying the validity of their baptism, is denying that they make any "part of the true church, but only a part of Antichrist," then his assertion may be true, and not otherwise. The supposition, however, is too absurd to be admitted; for it would bring us to this conclusion, that baptism constituted the true church of Christ:—



then consequently nothing more would be necessary to make men true Christians, but to be rightly baptized.

6. The author of the discourses has charged the *Anabaptists*\* with “placing such stress upon baptism in their mode, as to make it the subject on which to display their *greatest* zeal; thus making people believe, in too many instances, that going into the water will answer all the purposes of their present comfort and of their eternal salvation.” (Note, page 73.)

Can Mr. Worcester lay his hand upon his heart, and solemnly declare, that he believes the above charge to be true? If he believes it, he believes it because he has evidence of its truth; for he is certainly a rational man, and no rational man will believe without evidence. If he has evidence, he certainly can exhibit it to the public. And that we may be either proved guilty, or else honourably acquitted, we call upon him as a gentleman, as a man of honour, as a Christian, as a Christian minister, to bring forward the proof, that we “display our greatest zeal in making people believe, that going into the water will answer all the purposes of their present comfort and of their future salvation.”

If it could be fairly proved, that any minister who bears the name of a Baptist, had so far departed from our known and avowed sentiments, as to teach in the manner stated in the charge, he would, on being convicted, be immediately rejected from our connexion. It is notorious to all who have the least knowledge of our sentiments, that we baptize only upon a *profession of faith*. That is, such persons only as in a judgment of charity are thought to be experimental Christians.

\* The term Anabaptist, has by common consent been permitted to repose for about half a century. During this period, our opponents have generally been content to call us Baptists. but Mr. Worcester thinks it not sufficiently descriptive; for he says, “We are all Baptists,” and hence concludes, as we re-baptize (as he calls it) such as they have sprinkled in infancy, Anabaptist is the most proper term of distinction. (See his note, page 66.) A gentleman in Connecticut, who has lately published a large pamphlet on the subject of baptism, &c. seems not content with any names they have hitherto given us. He chooses to distinguish us by the term Dipping Baptists, and Duck-dipping Baptists, and I know not how many more names. After all, it will be remembered, that hard names, and hard arguments, are very different things.

Should any desire to be baptized upon the principle laid down in the charge, it would in our opinion prove them totally unqualified for the ordinance. The public have the charge before them, but candour requires that they should suspend their opinion until proof is exhibited to substantiate it. Mere vague report, or even some solitary instances of real imprudence, if such could be found, would not be deemed sufficient to fix a charge generally upon the whole denomination. Permit us to ask, Do we preach more frequently upon baptism in our mode, than Pædobaptists do upon the same subject in theirs? Do we write and publish more books in defence of our sentiments than they do of theirs? Facts speak so plainly to the contrary, that we think no one will assert it. Do we "place such a stress upon baptism in our mode," as to administer the ordinance to any who cannot give a satisfactory and scriptural reason of their hope? We certainly do not. The ministers of our denomination, perhaps all of them, have frequent applications for baptism by persons who are otherwise decent, but not being able to give evidence of a change of heart, they are denied. How then does it appear that we are guilty of "making people believe, in too many instances, that going into the water will answer all the purposes of their present comfort and eternal salvation?" It does not appear at all, at least from any thing known to us. On the whole, the charge before us has an aspect so perfectly resembling what the scriptures call *slander*, that if it had come from almost any other quarter besides from the Rev. Mr. Worcester, we should have been liable to have mistaken it for that detestable vice.

7. The next thing which we shall notice, is a charge against us of "delusion and superstition," on the account of our pretending to *follow* Christ into the water. (See note, page 71.)

This charge is indeed in the form of a question; but it is evidently intended to assert what it seems to inquire after. It is stated thus: "Does not the idea, then, of following Christ into the water, which has unhappily so powerful an effect upon many minds, partake very much of the nature of *delusion* and *superstition*?"

That the reader may better understand Mr. Worcester's argument, we observe, that the object of the note from which the above is extracted, is to explain away the evidence arising in favour of immersion, from John's baptism; or to prove that John's baptism was not Christian baptism; therefore, as Christ was baptized by him, it was "no example for Christians."

"Christ's baptism," saith he, "was designed regularly to introduce him into his priestly office, according to the law of Moses, under which he commenced his ministry, and which it behoved him to fulfil." This same sentiment was made the theme of a small pamphlet, published some years ago by Messrs. Fish and Crane, entitled, "The baptism of Jesus Christ not to be imitated by Christians." We have noticed observations to the same import in the writings of several other Pædobaptists.

The author before us continues his argument thus: "There is no evidence that Christ was buried in the water; and even if he were, his baptism was of an import very different from that of the baptism which he afterwards instituted for his followers. Are we to go into the water, under the idea of following Christ—into his priestly office? Ought we to call this *delusion* and *superstition*, or ought we to call it the *height of impiety*?"

The reader will here observe, that this argument denies that Christ's baptism would be an example for believers, if it could be proved beyond a doubt that he were immersed by John, in Jordan. The reason assigned, is, "his baptism was of a different import from that which he instituted for his *followers*." So it seems then, he did not intend his *followers* should *follow him*. Was not every other act of Christ's life, after he entered on his public work, as really of a "different import" from the work assigned us, as his baptism? If so, in what then are we to follow him?

Our Pædobaptist brethren argue their mode of sprinkling from the sprinklings under the law. These, no doubt, were precisely of the same *import* of infant baptism: no difficulty in tracing a complete resemblance here, though the sprinkling were only of blood and ashes! But if we talk of following Christ into the

water, so as to have our baptism resemble his, we are chargeable with the "height of impiety!"

We will now consider the arguments by which this charge is supported. It is said that "Christ's baptism was designed regularly to introduce him into his priestly office, according to the law of Moses." Hence this conclusion is drawn, that for any to pretend to imitate him in his baptism, must be a sacrilegious intrusion upon his priestly office.

But the sentiment stated above labours under several important difficulties: a few of them will be briefly noticed.

1. By the law of Moses, no *stranger* who was not of the seed of Aaron, might come near to offer incense on pain of death.\* Every thing which pertained to the service of the tabernacle was committed to the Levites, and the *stranger* that should dare to come nigh was to be *put to death*.† By the stranger here, we are not to understand the Gentiles, but any of the other tribes. As the tribe of Levi was selected for all the outward service of the tabernacle, so the priesthood was exclusively given to the house of Aaron. How then, we ask, could Jesus Christ be baptized, to introduce him "regularly into his priestly office, according to the law of Moses," when by that very law he could not be a priest?

2. If Jesus had been of the tribe of Levi, and of the family of Aaron, his baptism by John in Jordan could not have "regularly introduced him into his priestly office, according to the law of Moses;" for it did not correspond at all with that law, respecting a regular induction into the priest's office. The form of induction, as prescribed by Moses, is as follows:—*And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them, to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priests' office. Take one young bullock, and two rams without blemish; and unleavened bread, &c. And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water, &c.* After this they were to be adorned with holy garments, the bullock and the rams to be sacri-

\* Numb. xvi. 40.      † i. 51.

ficed, and Aaron and his sons sprinkled with the blood. This account may be seen at large in the twenty-ninth chapter of Exodus, which the reader is desired to compare with the baptism of Jesus by John in Jordan; and then let him ask himself, whether he can possibly believe that the latter was intended “regularly to introduce him into his priestly office, according to the law of Moses.” Had John attempted to have washed Jesus at the door of the tabernacle, with a view to induct him into the priest’s office, it is probable the whole nation would have risen up against them: for they were so zealous of the law of Moses, that Mr. Edwards tells us, “they would wrangle for a rite, quarrel for a fast, and almost fight for a new-moon.”

3. Another insuperable difficulty, which attends Mr. Worcester’s explanation of the baptism of Christ, is, *he was not made a priest after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.\** He not only pertained to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar, but was a priest of an order every way distinct from the order of Aaron, or any thing prescribed by the law of Moses. By the oath of God, Christ was made a priest *after the order of Melchizedec.†* Let it be fairly proved, that Melchizedec’s order of priesthood required that Jesus should be baptized in Jordan, and we will acknowledge the argument to be in point. But even to admit this, would establish another interesting idea, i. e. that Melchizedec was also a Baptist!

From the preceding remarks it appears that Mr. Worcester’s assertion, that “the baptism of Christ was regularly to introduce him into his priestly office,” is not only without foundation, but we conceive utterly incapable of proof. If the law of Moses limited the priesthood to the tribe of Levi; then Jesus, who was of the tribe of Judah, could not by that law be *regularly introduced* into the priest’s office. And if by divine appointment the persons legally qualified to be inducted into the priest’s office, were to be *washed at the door of the tabernacle—clothed with holy garments—and sprinkled with blood*, then the baptism of Jesus in Jordan,

\* Heb vii. 16.

† Psalm cx. 4.



as it differed from every thing prescribed by the law of Moses, cannot be considered as answering any requirement of that law. And if Christ were a priest after the order of Melchizedec, then the law of Moses respecting the Aaronic priesthood, had nothing to do with his induction into his priestly office.\*

Is it not astonishing that men who have the Bible in their hands, can reason at such a rate ; and, with “an assurance peculiar to themselves,” assert, that “the baptism of Christ is not to be imitated by Christians ;” but was “intended to introduce him into his priestly office ;” therefore to pretend to follow him into the water, must be “delusion and superstition,” if not the very “height of impiety ?”

What effect Mr. Worcester’s alarming charge of “delusion and superstition,” may have on such of his brethren as are dissatisfied with their infant baptism, and who have almost determined to follow Christ in his holy ordinances, we know not. It is possible that it may deter them from their duty a little longer, but we think in the end, they must see, that all his “exhibition of scripture argument,” amounts to nothing more than a bold assertion. If there be any law of Moses, that required Jesus to be baptized in Jordan, we shall thank Mr. Worcester to point it out to us ; for we cannot find it in our Bibles. If no such law ever existed, we

\* Great as Abraham the patriarch and father of the Jewish church was, the priesthood of Christ is reckoned after the order of one who was said to be greater than him. (Heb. vii. 7.) As Melchizedec brought forth *bread and wine* to Abraham, when he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him ; so Christ instituted *bread and wine* as the symbols by which his death should be commemorated to the end of time. This, and his offering of himself upon the tree of the cross, were acts which particularly distinguished the priestly office of Christ. We have no account of his ever officiating as a priest in the temple. He presented neither blood nor incense, besides his own. *For if he were on earth, said the apostle, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.*† Therefore Christ, as the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, when he had made this one offering for sin, did not enter into the holy place made with hands, but into heaven itself, by his own blood, and now appears in the presence of God for us.

† Heb. viii. 4.

must conclude the baptism of Christ had some other meaning.

The reader will compare the observations we have made, with those parts of the sacred scriptures to which they refer; particularly to Paul's account of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, in his epistle to the Hebrews. If this examination be made by an honest mind, aided by the enlightening influences of the Spirit of truth, we have no doubt but all his fears of its being mere "delusion and superstition," to follow the blessed Saviour in his baptismal example, will instantly vanish away. He will with grateful and adoring views of the condescension of the Son of God, most cheerfully follow him into his watery grave, and be *buried with him in baptism*, in the full and firm hope of rising to walk with him in newness of life.

If the author before us intended to fix his charge of *delusion, superstition, and impiety* only on such as mean by following Christ into the water, to "follow him in his priestly office," it will implicate none of the Baptists: for we presume none of them ever believed him to be baptized for that purpose. None but Pædobaptists, who cautiously shun the awful *delusion* of "imitating Christ in his baptism," believe any such thing. There must be a greater display of "scripture argument" than we have ever yet seen, to convince us that Christ was immersed by John to fulfil the law of Moses.

It is plain to be seen, how much Mr. Worcester regrets, that the idea of "following Christ into the water, which he says has unhappily so powerful an effect upon many minds," should after all be left in the hands of the Baptists, to be used as a "sort of popular charm," to get people into the water. That it has a very "powerful effect" upon a heaven-born soul, we have no doubt; but we never before heard that it was an "unhappy" effect. If those who have felt its influence are the proper judges, the evidence will certainly be turned against him. On the whole, we see nothing which bids fairer to come under the denomination of "delusion," than to be left to believe, that Christ *did not intend his baptism should be imitated by his followers*. The Jews boasted that they were not Christ's, but Moses's disciples;

and some Pædobaptists seem to exult that they are not so *deluded* as to follow him into the water, to imitate his baptismal example. We envy not their happiness, but we freely confess, we aspire after the felicity of those of whom it will one day be said, *These are they which FOLLOW THE LAMB whithersoever he goeth.\**

There are many other things in the discourses which have been the subject of these animadversions, which we consider as highly reprehensible, but our limits forbid that we should enlarge. A few things, which respect the mode of baptism, will probably be noticed in our next section. Mr. Edwards proposed a short method with the Baptists, but Mr. Worcester has taken a still shorter; for while the former attempted to run down one or two of their main arguments, the latter has only to declare that they do not "touch the point," and the business is done. His words are, "The arguments most in use among the Antipædobaptists, and of the greatest efficacy, as a sort of popular charm, do not touch the points of real difference between us and them." (Note, page 58.) If the "real points of difference have not been touched," in the preceding sheets, we shall only have to regret our inability to discern them. Our object has been to "touch" them so as to be felt, yet in a respectful candid manner; whether we have failed in the attempt an impartial public will judge. Conscious of having directed our arguments to the "real points of difference," it would give us little pain should any gentleman *modestly* declare them nothing more than "a popular charm." We pray God to succeed them, for the removal of *real differences* between good men.

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## SECTION VII.

*Strictures on the Observations of the Rev. Mr. Worcester, Dr. Osgood, and others, upon the MODE of Baptism.*

IT is extremely difficult to write or speak so as not to be censured by those who are disposed to cavil. "If your sentiments are consistent," say our opponents,

\* Rev. xiv. 4.

"why do you talk about the mode of baptism? Immersion and baptism must be synonymous terms with you." They are indeed so with us, and when we talk or write to those of our own denomination, we use them in this sense. But, says another, "the dispute is not about baptism itself, but only about a *mere mode* of baptism." Very well; let it be mode, if we can only understand one another. We shall therefore use the term *mode*, not meaning by it to concede that there are different modes equally valid, but as being best adapted to explain the different views of the two denominations. "The question," saith Mr. Worcester, "properly between us, is not this, Whether any were baptized in the days of Christ and his apostles by immersion or dipping; but it is precisely this, Whether immersion or dipping be the only valid *mode* of baptism." (Note, page 73.)

If Mr. Worcester himself can "touch the points of real difference between us and them," and this is an accurate statement of one of them, it will narrow the ground of controversy considerably. By this statement it will be seen, that if it be not a question between us and them, "whether some were baptized in the days of Christ and his apostles by immersion," then it must be a conceded point that there were some immersed at that period. And if it be not a question, whether immersion or dipping be a valid mode of baptism, but whether it be the "*only valid mode*," then immersion is unquestionably a valid mode. The "point of difference" is here so nicely "touched," as to leave our practice on the firm basis of apostolic authority. Let the author before us prove sprinkling to be equally valid, and there will be no question about that: it will then be acknowledged by us as well as them, that both are valid.

That immersion is an apostolic valid mode, is as capable of proof as any other event placed at that distance. But it may be asked, How is it to be proved? We answer, 1st, from a fair and candid construction of scripture testimony respecting the ordinance; 2d, from the most authentic ecclesiastical history; and 3d, we also prove it from the full and fair concessions of many

of the most learned and pious Pædobaptists themselves.\*

After furnishing all this kind of proof, in the most ample and plenary manner, our opponents insist that we must also *disprove* their mode. We can see no propriety in such a demand, nor shall we undertake it, any further than the proving our own will disprove theirs. If they practise sprinkling for baptism, they certainly ought to exhibit proof of its validity.

Mr. Worcester charges the author of the Seven Sermons on the subjects and mode of baptism, that "he *asserts* much and *proves* little." We think that some of his own assertions would have carried quite as much conviction, if they had been supported by a little more proof. His fifth inference labours for the want of proof. It is stated as follows: "It may be inferred from our subject, that sprinkling or affusion is a *valid and scriptural mode* of baptism." (page 64.) But from what is this inference drawn? Not from any direct scripture testimony, for the scriptures are wholly "silent."† Not from any authentic history, "because there is nothing directly on the subject, either for or against infant baptism, in the fragments which have come down to us of the writings of the first century."‡ It must therefore rest on the following circumstances: That a church was constituted in the family of Abraham; that circumcision was a seal or token of membership in that church; that the same church has been continued under the gospel dispensation, and for ages has been exclusively among the Pædobaptists; that God has owned them as his church; and they have always practised sprinkling or affusion; therefore, "sprinkling or affusion is a *valid and scriptural mode* of baptism." If the inference has any thing better than the above to support it, we very much mistake. As a specimen of Mr. Worcester's reasoning in support of the inference, the reader will take the following: "But if there have been, in every period, a true church in the world; then there have been, in every period, essentially correct views of the sacra-

\* See Part II. Sect. iv. and v.

† Mr. P. Edwards.

‡ Mr. Worcester, note, page 60.



ments and seals of the church. In particular, since the alteration of the first seal, there must have been essentially correct views of baptism: for it were no less absurd in itself, than incompatible with the purposes and promises of God, to suppose that at any period a true church has existed without essentially correct views of the first sacrament and seal."

"It is, however, (continues the author) a well supported fact, that in the first ages of Christianity, and for about twelve or fifteen hundred years, baptism by sprinkling or affusion was universally allowed to be scriptural and valid. Even those who in *ordinary cases* baptized by immersion, did not deny, but admitted, the validity of baptism by sprinkling or affusion." (page 64, 65.)

The reader will here notice another full and fair concession—that the manner of baptizing was in *ordinary cases* by IMMERSION. This is an undoubted fact: but that sprinkling, during the apostolic age, and for two centuries after, was allowed to be *scriptural*, or, properly speaking, *valid*, we shall not believe without proof. Eusebius, about the middle of the third century, gives us the following account of *Novatus*: "He fell into a grievous distemper, and it being supposed that he would die immediately, he received baptism (being besprinkled with water) on the bed whereon he lay, if that can be called baptism."\* If sprinkling were considered equally valid as immersion, why should this ancient father make the above exception? If equally valid, why should the *Neocæsarian Council* declare such persons incapable of being admitted to the degree of presbyters in the church?† We have never yet seen any fair proof that sprinkling was in any instance admitted in the apostolic age. But after inspiration had ceased, and men began to mix their own inventions with the pure doctrine of Christ, and had concluded that baptism was essential to salvation, cases frequently occurred which they called *cases of necessity*; that is, where persons were sick and in danger of dying. These were, we acknowledge, in some instances sprinkled:

\* See Part II. page 95.

† Dr. Cave, page 196.

but this sprinkling was almost as different from that which is now in use as immersion itself. It was not a few drops of water put on the face only, but the persons were sprinkled from head to foot.\* It was an entire wetting, like what is said of Nebuchadnezzar, who was wet with the dew of heaven. This wetting of the person all over by sprinkling, though it were not an immersion, it approximated to it; and even this was admitted only in cases of imperious necessity. Dr. Cave thus remarks upon it: "This was accounted a *less solemn and perfect* kind of baptism, partly because it was done *not by immersion*, but by *sprinkling*; partly because persons were supposed at such a time to desire it, chiefly out of fear of death."† The Doctor further adds, "The place where this solemn action was performed, was at first unlimited. Any place where there was water, as Justin Martyr tell us, in *ponds and lakes*; at *springs* or *rivers*, as Tertullian speaks. Afterwards they had their (*baptisteria*) fonts built, at first near the church, then in the church-porch, to represent baptism as being the entrance into the mystical church."‡ These, he informs us, were usually very large and capacious, so "that they might comport with the general customs of those times, of persons baptized being immersed or put under water."

Two things are clearly demonstrated by the above quotations. First, That *immersion*, during the first centuries, was considered as the only scriptural baptism. Second, That *sprinkling* was admitted only in cases of supposed necessity, and then considered as a kind of *imperfect* baptism. This proves that it was a mere human invention, a departure from the instituted mode; for if it had been sanctioned by apostolic authority, it must have been considered equally valid as immersion. In fact, there can be no fair reason assigned why they should immerse in ordinary cases, or even at all, had they viewed sprinkling equally valid.

"It is, however, a well supported fact," saith Mr. Worcester, "that in the first ages of Christianity, and

\* See Dr. Witfius on the Covenants, Vol. III.

† Prim. Christianity, page 196.      ‡ Ibid, page 198, 199.

for about twelve or fifteen hundred years, baptism by sprinkling or affusion was universally allowed to be scriptural and valid." By whom is this "fact supported?" Certainly not by Eusebius and Socrates;\* not by Cave,† Wall,‡ Mosheim,§ nor Robinson.¶ These all support exactly the contrary; that immersion was the divinely appointed mode, and that sprinkling, for the sake of conveniency or necessity, without divine authority, was adopted in its room. In proof of this, we add the following: "There has," says Dr. Wall, "no novelty or alteration, that I know of, in point of baptism, been brought into our church, but in the *way* or *manner* of administering it. The way that is now ordinarily used, WE CANNOT DENY TO HAVE BEEN A NOVELTY, brought into the church by those who learned it in Germany or at Geneva."¶ This honest confession, with what we have quoted from Eusebius and Cave, militates exceedingly with Mr. Worcester's "well supported fact," of the scriptural validity of sprinkling.

After spending a number of pages, in attempting to prove the validity of sprinkling from the practice of the Pædobaptist churches, without producing the least *scripture authority*, Mr. Worcester adds, "The fair and *invincible* conclusion then is, that sprinkling or affusion, the mode of baptism practised in these churches, is scriptural and valid." On what does this *invincible* conclusion rest? Why truly, on this, 'That the Pædobaptists, who are God's true church in an exclusive sense, have for centuries practised sprinkling in the room of immersion, *therefore* it must be "scriptural and valid." The author does not pretend to have proved it from the Bible, but informs us "there is nothing in the scriptures against it, but much, as might be shewn did *time* permit, in favour of it." (page 69) What a pity it is that he had not spared some of his *time* spent in invectives against the Baptists, and proved this important point. If it had been of no service to us, it might have helped some of his wavering brethren, who we conceive

\* Eccl. Hist.

† Prim. Chris.

‡ Hist. Infant Bap.

§ Eccl. Hist.

¶ Hist. Bap. and Eccl. Researches.

¶ Defence of Hist. Infant Bap. p. 146.

must be more perplexed than ever, from the confused contradictory account he has given of the ordinance.

Mr. Worcester has conceded, not only implicitly, but in direct terms, that immersion was the *ancient ordinary* mode : yea, that it was practised in the days of Christ and his apostles ; and after all denied that there is any proof of it. We will place his observations before the reader, and leave him to make his own comments.

Speaking of baptism in the "first ages of Christianity," he says, "Even those who in *ordinary cases baptized by immersion*, did not deny, but admitted the validity of baptism by sprinkling or affusion." (page 64, 65.) Again, "The question properly between us is *not* this, *Whether* ANY WERE BAPTIZED IN THE DAYS OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES BY IMMERSION OR DIPPING ; but it is precisely this, Whether immersion or dipping be the only valid mode of baptism ? (Note, page 73.) He quotes the following from Dr. Wall : "The ancient Christians, when they *were baptized by IMMERSION*, were all baptized naked, &c." "It is a clear case," says the author, "that *when they were baptized by IMMERSION*, they were immersed three times, &c." (Note page 74.) These are some of the concessions in the discourses before us. The following appear to us like contradictions. "We have (saith the author) no evidence in the scriptures, that in the days of Christ and his apostles, *any person was baptized by IMMERSION*." (page 69.) "Could it even be proved, as however it cannot be, that *some were baptized in the apostles' days by IMMERSION*, it would avail nothing against our practice, unless it could be proved that none were baptized in any other way." (Note, page 73.)

It is thought that Mr. Worcester has fallen into the same inconsistencies in defending his own practice as in opposing ours. The following is a specimen : "As there was (saith he) no dispute about baptism in the first ages of Christianity, it should not be expected that much would be found particularly on the subject, in the writings of those ages. But because THERE IS NOTHING DIRECTLY ON THE SUBJECT EITHER FOR OR AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM, in the fragments which have come down to us of the writings of the first century,



the Antipædobaptists, with an assurance peculiar to themselves, have undertaken to *assert*, not to *prove*, that during the first century, infant baptism was not practised in the church." (Note, page 60.) After thus acknowledging that in the writings of the first century there is nothing directly "either for or against infant baptism," he goes on to say, that "in the writings of *Clemanus Romanus*, and *Hermes Pastor*, both contemporaries with the apostles, passages are extant, which by *fair implication*, prove the practice of infant baptism in their day."\*

\* There is an ingenious obscurity in the manner of Mr. Worcester's quoting these ancient writers. Had we no other means of ascertaining the time when they lived and wrote, but the statement in the note before us, it would not be very easy to determine in what century they lived. An incautious reader might suppose that they all lived in or near the first century; whereas the fact is, they extend through four or five. "Tertulian," says the author before us, "was about 11 years old when Polycarp died." But how are we to know when Polycarp died? Again, "Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who suffered martyrdom for the Christian faith, only about five years from the death of Origen." Ah, indeed, it is presumed that every one knows when Origen died! But what of Cyprian? Why, he "was president of a council which consisted of sixty-six bishops or pastors of churches, and which delivered an unanimous opinion that the baptism of infants was not to be deferred (as some had supposed it should be) until the eighth day, but might be given them at any time before." But when was this council held? Why, some time in the life of Cyprian, and he suffered martyrdom only five years after the death of Origen. Now who could tell by all this whether this council was held in the first, second or third century? But what does the result of it prove, with respect to infant baptism's being an apostolic practice? Nothing at all we conceive, but much to the contrary. The fact is, this council was in the year 256. The occasion was, a country bishop by the name of Fidus could not determine by his Bible, nor by any usage of the church, whether new-born infants might be baptized, or whether it must be deferred until the eighth day. He applied to Cyprian, but he had no rule by which to determine the question, until it was settled by the *opinion* of the above council. If it had been the constant practice of the whole Christian church from the first institution of baptism, which was now more than 200 years, to baptize infants, would such an important circumstance have been unnoticed all this time? It is absolutely incredible.

To the above account the author adds, "Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Ambrose, Chrysostome, and Jerome, all of whom flourished within about a hundred years of Origen and Cyprian, are all explicit on the subject; explain the design of infant baptism, &c." (Note, page 60.) The above mentioned all lived in the fourth century, and one or more of them in the beginning of the fifth. As these are said to be "explicit on the subject, and to explain the *design* of infant baptism;" we think it would gratify our readers, to know what the *design* of it was. We will give them the opinion of the first of them. Gregory, as delivered



What a happy knack some men have at proving their point. When all other evidence fails, they can prove it completely by implication; and even from writings too, which say "nothing directly on the subject, either for or against it." We regret exceedingly, however, that those "passages" which prove infant baptism by fair implication, had not been set down, so that we might have judged of the evidence for ourselves. Or had the author only favoured us with correct references to the book and page, it is more than probable that some might have taken the liberty to have examined the originals for themselves. However, it is best to proceed cautiously: there might be some danger apprehended from this; for "of late (says he) one can hardly meet with an Antipædobaptist, who is not prepared to talk so fluently and learnedly of the meaning of *Greek* and *Latin* words, as almost to amaze one!!" Had such references been made, it is possible that some of this evidence by implication might have been disputed.

Several other writers of the two first centuries are mentioned; but none of them as giving explicit evidence in favour of infant baptism, till we come to Origen, towards the middle of the third century. We are willing that the testimony of Origen should have its proper weight; but we are persuaded, that such as know his true character, as it stands on the page of history, will attach very little confidence to what he has said on this point. The following is quoted from him by Dr. Mosheim: "The scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written." To

in his fortieth Oration in the year 381. "But, say some, what is your opinion of infants, who are not capable of judging either of the *grace* of baptism, or of the *damage* sustained by the want of it; shall we baptize them too? By all means, *if there be any apparent danger*. For it were better that they were *sanctified without their knowing it*, than that they should die without being sealed and initiated. As for others, I give my opinion, that when they are three years of age, or thereabouts (for then they are able to hear and answer some of the mystical words, and although they do not fully understand, they may receive impressions) they may be sanctified both soul and body by the great mystery of initiation." (Greg. Naz. Orat. xl. in Robinson.) What wonderful children, to understand such profound mysteries at three years old! And what an amazing effect this business of *initiation* had, to sanctify them throughout in soul and body.

which the Doctor adds this observation : " He could not find in the Bible the opinions he had adopted, as long as he interpreted that sacred book according to its literal sense."\* It is of little consequence in this dispute, to know that men in the third and fourth centuries approved and practised infant baptism. Nor do we conceive that the " impregnable testimony " of Pelagius, (a man condemned by all the ancient fathers as a heretic) adds any strength to Mr. Worcester's argument.

Another argument in favour of sprinkling, and against immersion, which makes a considerable figure in these discourses, and in the writings of some others, is, that sprinkling is *the most easy and convenient mode*. " Of the several accounts of baptisms recorded in the scriptures, I think (says Mr. Worcester) it will appear that those baptisms were performed in the most *easy and convenient mode*." (page 70.) He supposes that when John's candidates were " assembled upon the banks of the Jordan, the most *convenient* way would be for them to go down to the brink of the water, and there be baptized by affusion or sprinkling." " On the day of *pentecost*, (he adds) when three thousands were baptized in a very short time ; they were at the temple in the midst of Jerusalem, where the most *convenient*, if not the only way, would be to have water brought in a basin, or some other vessel, and baptize them in the same way." (page 72.) It would seem, by these observations, that the command of God must yield to our *conveniency*. What exalted ideas such men must have of the authority of God in his positive institutions, to suppose we are to accommodate them to our own *conveniency* ! Had good old Abraham, at the age of ninety-nine, consulted his *conveniency*, would he not probably have preferred cutting the end of his little finger, to the part appointed by the institution of circumcision ?

We have no right nor wish to say, that our brethren shall not consult *their convenience* in the administration of the ordinance ; but for ourselves, we hope never to think it inconvenient to obey the commands of Christ, and follow the example of him who thought it no *incon-*

\* Mosheim, Vol. I. page 270, note.

venience to travel on foot from Galilee to Jordan, to be immersed by John in that river.

Sprinkling is also said to have another great advantage over immersion: It is not only more convenient, but "more compatible with every idea of propriety and DECENCY." (page 73.)

Dr. Osgood \* dilates largely on the decency of their practice, and the indecency of ours. "To me, (saith he) indeed, this (sprinkling) appears the only mode in which the ordinance can be administered with that order, decency," &c. He adds, "Their leaving the place of worship, *streaming* away in the open air to some pond or river, and in all seasons and climates, changing their apparel in order to their being totally immersed in the water, out of which they come *drenched* and *shivering*," &c. (page 8.) He concludes, however, that "baptism by immersion might not, perhaps, eighteen hundred years ago, be offensive in Judea; nor can we say that it would disgust the uncultivated and unclothed inhabitants of South Africa, even now; but it is certain, that the custom of plunging mixed multitudes of men and women, either in thin vestments or in their usual dress, is deemed indecorous by most people accustomed to polished manners." (page 14.) Eighteen centuries ago, it seems, then, it might not have been *offensive* for Jesus and his disciples to be immersed, but it is now absolutely "indecorous" to follow their example! And is there nothing, dear sir, "indecorous" in comparing the state of manners in the primitive Christian church, containing Christ and all his disciples, to the lowest dregs of the human race? to the *Bejchemen* or *wild Hottentots* of South Africa? Must not such a comparison strike a tender mind with horror, and be considered as a most severe reflection on the great Head of the church, and all his immediate followers? Who can help reflecting on the prophetic language of David, when personating Christ, *The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.*† Is the religion of Jesus, especially its institutions, when practised as they were in "Judea eighteen hundred years ago, deemed indecorous" by people of

\* Two Discourses at Malden.

† Psalm lxi. 9.

“polished manners?” Such people would do well to remember, *that the friendship of the world is enmity with God*;\* and that Christ, in order to guard his people against this temporizing spirit, has said, *Whosoever shall be ASHAMED of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.*†

But what astonishes us most of all, is, that after all this outcry about *decency* and offending against *polished manners*, that the Doctor should inform the world, that their ministers will be guilty of doing the same!! Yes, “we are (saith he) far from calling in question the validity of theirs, (meaning our mode of baptism); nay, in condescension to the consciences of those who *request it*, our ministers scruple not to baptize by immersion.” Is it possible, Doctor? What! will your ministers and their people “go streaming away in the open air to some pond or river?” What! and with as little sense of decency as the Baptists, be “totally immersed in the water,” and like them “come drenched and shivering” out of it? It is perfectly astonishing! But why do they thus trespass upon the customs of “polished manners?” Why? not indeed from a conscientious regard to the command or example of Christ, but “in condescension to the consciences of those who request it.” So great is their *condescension*, that it seems they can *become all things to all men, that by all means they may save some*—of their people from going over to the Baptists.

Mr. Worcester has mentioned one species of Indecency, which he suggests was practised anciently in immersion, which in this age of improvement is wholly done away. He relates the story from Dr. Wall, and he from Vossius, and where he got it nobody knows; but it is thus related in the discourses before us: “The ancient Christians,” says Dr. Wall, “when they were baptized by immersion, *were all baptized naked*, whether they were *men, women, or children*. Vossius has collected several proofs of this, which I shall omit, because it is a clear case.” (Note, page 74.) If Mr. Worcester is acquainted with Dr. Wall’s writings, as he undoubt-

\* James iv. 4.

† Luke ix. 26.

edly is, he must certainly know that the Doctor has strenuously asserted that immersion was the primitive ordinary mode throughout almost the whole Christian world, for thirteen centuries, and in many countries much longer.\* Can any man in his senses suppose that Dr. Wall seriously believed, that during this long period of thirteen or fifteen centuries, there was not a scrap of modesty in the whole Christian world? Would he have pleaded for the restoration of a practice that had constantly been a reproach to decency? We hardly think it.

But we should like to know who this Vossius was; who furnished this indecent story, that we may know what degree of credit is due to it. Was it *Isaac Vossius*, who came over from Leyden to England in 1670, whom king Charles made canon of Windsor? Of this person an English biographer thus remarks; that Charles knew his character well enough to say, “there was nothing that Vossius *refused to believe, excepting the BIBLE!*” He further adds, “He appears indeed by his publications—to have been a most *credulous man*, while he afforded many circumstances to bring his religious faith in question.” If there be no other proof that the ancient Christians baptized naked, than what can be gathered from the writings of such a man, we shall think ourselves at liberty to doubt it. But, true or false, Mr. Worcester has cleared the Baptists of the disgraceful story. For this practice is said by Dr. Wall to have been among the *ancient Christians*. “But the Anabaptists, or Antipædobaptists,” says our author, “are a sect of *modern date*. They had their origin some time after the reformation under Luther and Calvin.” (P. 66.) According to this, the Pædobaptists may place all these *naked folks* to their own account. And if they consult Dr. Mosheim, (vol. i. p. 227) or Broughton’s Historical Library, (vol. i. p. 14) they may find an account of others, who, it is said, went naked, not indeed *into the water*, but into their public assemblies.†

\* See Part II. Sect. iv. and v.

† That people in warm climates anciently went almost naked, with only a covering round the waist, no body will dispute. See *Antiq.*



By dating the origin of the Baptists "some time after the reformation," our opponents exonerate *us* from all the indecencies, pious frauds, errors, heresies, and persecutions, which disgraced Christianity before that period.

We must here beg the reader's indulgence while we digress a few moments from our subject, with a view to repel an ungenerous insinuation respecting our origin. The riot at Munster, in which some who opposed and denied infant baptism were concerned with others who held it, is generally fixed upon as the most dishonourable part of our history. We regret that our limits will not allow us to vindicate ourselves more fully from the unhandsome things which have been so often suggested, from that transaction, with a view to injure our character as a religious denomination. But we can here only say, that we verily believe, that to take the account of the German Anabaptists, as given by their enemies, nothing will be found either more wicked or disgraceful in this sect, than may be found in the origin of almost any other ancient sect, taking their history from the same source.

For instance; the Independents in England, from whom the present respectable Congregational Churches in this country descended. If you take their history from *Clarendon*, *Echard*, *Parker*, or even from *Rapin*, you will find the observation justified. The latter, though a foreigner, is allowed to have written one of the best histories of England extant. This illustrious writer, saith Dr. Mosheim, represents the "*Independents* under such horrid colours; that, were his portrait just, they would not deserve to enjoy the light of the sun, or to breathe the free air of Britain; much less to be treated with indulgence and esteem, by those who have the cause of virtue at heart." However unjustly they might be accused, "the most eminent English writers, (adds the Doctor) not only among the patrons of Episcopacy, but among those very *Presbyterians*, with whom they are now united, have thrown out against them the bit-

is still practised by the inhabitants of the torrid zone. That they went into the water in their usual dress is highly probable; but that any were baptized without a covering round the waist, we have seen no sufficient proof.

terest accusations and the severest invectives, that the warmest imagination could invent. They have not only been represented as delirious, mad, fanatical, illiterate, factious, and ignorant both of natural and revealed religion; but also abandoned to all kinds of wickedness and sedition, and as the only authors of the odious parricide committed on the person of Charles I.\* We do not pretend to vouch for the truth of these things, nor do we believe them generally to be true; but only mention them to shew that other sects have been as severely censured as the Anabaptists. If we compare the accounts given by the enemies of the two sects, this will be about the result—The fanatics of one, in their wild zeal, set up a king; and the fanatics of the other pulled down theirs.

But even admitting all that has been said of the German Anabaptists to be true, and we can see no more propriety in reproaching the present Baptists with it, than there would be in reproaching the present Pædobaptists with all the errors, debaucheries, and enormous cruelties committed by the Pædobaptists of Rome. The fact is, though we agree essentially with the German Baptists in the article of baptism, yet we totally disapprove of their disorderly, seditious fanaticism. So we understand our brethren, that while they agree with the church of Rome in their infant baptism, they disagree with their sentiments and practice generally. The only inquiry which a candid mind would here make would be this; Is there any thing in immersion which has a natural tendency to fanaticism and sedition?

Our object in this section was not particularly to exhibit all the proofs in favour of immersion of which the subject is susceptible, (as that, we conceive, has been sufficiently done, Part II. sect. iv. and v.) but more especially to remove some of the objections which have been raised against the practice by its opposers. We have endeavoured candidly to meet the most weighty and popular objections, and the public will judge whether we have refuted them or not. A few additional observations shall close the section.

\* Eccl. Hist. vol. v. p. 181, 182.

“The Greek word *baptizo*,” says Mr. Worcester, “determines nothing in respect to the particular mode in which water is to be applied.” (P. 69.) This is certainly an unpleasant circumstance, if true, that a word is made use of to describe a particular action, and yet that it has no definite meaning, so that we can possibly determine from it what is to be done. “Every person,” says Dr. Osgood, “who hath the like acquaintance with them (that is, with the original languages as himself) well knows, that the Greek word for baptism signifies any kind of washing, by sprinkling or affusion, as often, if not much oftener, than by dipping.” The object with both these writers is evidently the same: it is to throw the word into a state of complete uncertainty, and in this way to secure the validity of sprinkling. It means, according to them, any kind of washing, either by dipping, pouring on water, or sprinkling. Nor is there any direction to what part the water is to be applied; whether to the head, the hands, or the feet. We know of nothing but custom, which has determined the application of it to the forehead.

We wish here to state a case, and should be much gratified in a fair answer. Supposing a family of the descendants of Abraham were to embrace Christianity under the ministry of the Pædobaptists, and should receive their doctrine of baptism, as coming in the room of circumcision; and should hence insist, that in order to render it analogous to that rite, the water must be applied to the same part; would these gentlemen, in their great “condescension to the consciences” of their Jewish converts, apply water in this way? Could they make any fair objection, and still support their baptism on the ground of circumcision? We should suppose not. If the manner of applying water is to be determined by the consciences, or rather fancies of the candidates for the ordinance, then any way, and to any part which they may choose, must be considered as valid baptism.

But let us for a moment inquire if the word *baptizo*, which is rendered *baptize*, has not a primary meaning, sufficiently definite to direct our practice. “The word,” says a very sensible writer, “is confessedly Greek. Native Greeks understand their own language better than

foreigners; and they have always understood the word to mean *dipping*; therefore from their first embracing Christianity to this day, they have always baptized, and do yet baptize by *immersion*.\* We appeal to our learned opponents to say, whether the Greek church in all its branches, even the cold regions of Russia not excepted, has not to the present time practised *immersion*? We hence reason in this way:—The New Testament was originally written in Greek; that native Greeks understood the word *baptizo* as we do, to mean immersion, and consequently they always practised immersion: this alone, we should suppose, would be allowed to be decisive evidence of the meaning of the word.—The best critics of all the Christian sects have agreed with Leigh,† “that the native and proper signification of it (*baptizo*) is to *dip into water*, or to *plunge under water*.”—When the action is described in the New Testament, it is described by their going down *into* the water, and coming up *out of* it; which would be absurd upon any other principle but immersion.—That it was understood in the same sense by the Christian church generally during the first centuries; this is evident from every ecclesiastical writer of any note whose works have come to our knowledge. These things considered, can there a doubt remain as to its proper meaning?

As we have quoted largely from the above class of writers in a preceding part of this work, we shall here only add two or three quotations from Dr. Motheim. In describing the rites and ceremonies of the first century, he says, “The sacrament of *baptism* was administered in this century, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose; and was performed by *immersion of the whole body* in the baptismal font.”‡ In this author, there is not a word to be found in the history of this century, of pouring or sprinkling, as “a scriptural and valid mode of baptism.” But what may be done by “fair implication,” we pretend not to say.

Let us now follow this learned historian into the next century, and see how the ordinance was then administered. “The persons,” saith he, “to be baptized, after

E e 2

\* Robinson's Hist. Bapt. p. 5.

† Crit. Sacra.

‡ Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 126.

they had repeated the *creed*, confessed and renounced their sins, and particularly the devil in his pompous allurements, *were* IMMERSED *under water*, and received into Christ's kingdom, by a solemn invocation of Father, Son," &c. (Ibid. p. 206 )

Thus, according to Dr. Mosheim, (and it must not be forgotten that he was a Pædobaptist) the apostolic mode of baptism was preserved through this century. Had either *sprinkling* or *affusion* been practised in these centuries, is it not perfectly unaccountable that not a hint should be given of it by this author? What could induce him to keep such a fullen silence about it? Had he not the advantage of examining the writings of *Clemens*, *Hermes*, *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, and all the other ancient writers mentioned by Mr. Worcester? He undoubtedly had, for he has quoted from many if not all of them.

If the fullest evidence could be exhibited of the existence of infant baptism, in the third and succeeding centuries, and that it were then practised by pouring or sprinkling, it would afford no decisive evidence that either were practised by the apostles. Any one who has taken the pains to trace the progress of innovation, will be fully convinced of this: he will find such an increase of rites and ceremonies from century to century, as in a little time to change the visible aspect of almost the whole Christian church. But notwithstanding this general departure from apostolic purity both in doctrine and manners, *immersion* held its indisputable claim, of being the divinely appointed mode of baptism. We say *mode*, because sprinkling in some instances was admitted, in cases of danger of death, as a substitute. And we verily believe, that "after all the laborious and ostentatious criticism" upon *baptizo*, to make it mean *pouring* or *sprinkling*; and upon *en*, *apo*, and *eis*,\* there could not be found among the Pædobaptists themselves, one person in ten who had ever thought on the subject, but would freely acknowledge that he believed Jesus Christ was *immersed* by John in Jordan. Nor do we think our brethren who plead for the validity of sprinkling, disbe-

\* Vid. Dr. Crane's Sermons.



lieve it themselves. If this be indeed an error, we can think of but one complete remedy for it; and that is, to alter the Bible! Whilst the present translation is received, and people are permitted to read and think for themselves, it may be expected that there will be a general conviction, that Jesus was plunged in Jordan. And all attempts to prove, that this was to answer to the washing of the priests at the tabernacle door, in order to introduce him into his priestly office, will help to strengthen this conviction; for it will be seen that the Pædobaptists themselves feel the difficulty, and try to get rid of it in this way.

We have no where in the course of these animadversions attempted to vindicate Mr. Merrill, as we think him able, and believe him determined, to do it himself;\* but wish here to notice a criticism made by Mr. Austin on John xii. 10, in his Letters addressed to the above author. (P. 39.) "You mention," saith Mr. Austin, "*louo*, as signifying the same with *baptizo*, &c. If you will (continues he) turn to John xiii. 10, just adverted to, a place which you have not mentioned, and probably not considered, you will find evidence *directly* and *conclusively* against this idea. 'Jesus saith unto him, *He* that is washed (*ὁ λελουμένος*) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.'" On this Mr. Austin observes—"Here the subject spoken of is not the feet, or hands, or face; but the man, *he*, in Greek, *ὁ*. *He* is washed when his feet only are washed; and *nipsasthai* is used, to express this washing of the feet."

But has not Mr. Austin after all missed the force of our Saviour's observation? Did not Jesus intend to express two distinct acts, one a general, and the other a partial washing? one a bathing of the whole body, and the other a washing of the feet, and therefore made use of two different words? In the first, Christ uses the past

\* Pædobaptists, who write or speak of Mr. Merrill, affect to treat him with much contempt, as though he were a man of inferior learning and talents. If they believe it, is it not astonishing that so many pens should be employed against him, and these wielded too by men of the first literary eminence? If their representations be true, they would gain but little honour should they beat him; but would it not be infinitely disgraceful to be beaten by him, after thus despising him?

tense; *He that is* (léloumenos) *washed needeth not save* (nipsathai) *to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.* *He that is washed*, if this referred to the washing of the feet, needed not to wash at all, according to Mr. Austin, for this expressed an act already done.

Lest the sense we have given above should be thought to be a mere "imagination of the Baptists,"\* we subjoin the remarks of the amiable Dr. Doddridge. "He that is *washed already*, or that has just been *bathing*, needs only to wash his feet, which may indeed be easily soiled by the shortest walk, and when that is done he is entirely clean."† Upon the above he has the following critical note:—"He that has been *bathing*. This rendering of the word *léloumenos* is confirmed by *Elfner*, (*Observ.* vol. i. p. 337, 338) and gives as it were a compendious paraphrase upon it. *Clarius* has well observed, that as the *apoduterion*, or room in which they dressed themselves after bathing, was *different* from that in which they bathed, the feet might be so soiled in walking from one to the other, as to make it necessary immediately to wash them again."

If Dr. Doddridge be right, it affords a high probability that Mr. Merrill may also be right. If, according to the above, two distinct acts were intended by Christ, then Mr. Austin has overlooked the real meaning of the passage.‡

On the whole, we have one undeniable advantage over our opponents in this dispute about the *mode* of baptism. Ours corresponds with the primary sense of the original word to baptize, and certainly with the practice of the primitive Christians. Theirs, by the confessions of many of their best writers, is a departure from both. If it had been the intention of the great Head of the Church, that this rite should have been per-

\* Dr. Osgood, p. 21.

† *Expof.* vol. ii. p. 426.

‡ Mr. Austin appears peculiarly unfortunate in the choice of the word *affusion* to represent the *mode* of applying water in baptism, as it neither agrees with the Bible, nor his own practice. No one will deny but a man may be as thoroughly wet by pouring water on him, as by dipping him into it; but the question is, has Mr. Austin produced any instance where the Greek verb ΕΚΕΟ, (to affuse or pour) has been rendered *baptize*; if not, what argument is there in his attaching it to baptism sixty times over?

formed by *pouring on water*, would not *keo* (to affuse, to pour) have been used, instead of *baptizo* (to dip, to plunge, &c.)? Or if sprinkling had been intended, should we not sometimes have found *rantizo* (to asperse, to sprinkle) used to express the act of baptizing, instead of a word, which in its primary sense signifies immersion?

Figurative expressions are constantly resorted to by our brethren to support their practice: such as *sprinkling many nations, sprinkling clean water, pouring out of the Spirit, &c.* With these, we have only to contrast other scriptures, which represent the same thing, by an entire washing or plunging: such as the following. *In that day there shall be a FOUNTAIN opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.\** *Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins IN his own blood.†* *These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white IN the blood of the Lamb.‡* These latter afford just as much evidence of immersion, as the former do of sprinkling. But as neither of them have any thing to do with the subject, neither of them afford any direct proof in the case.

“There is an expression,” says Dr. Osgood, “occurring once or twice in the writings of St. Paul, which seems to have full possession of the *imagination* of our Baptist brethren, and renders them positive that immersion was the primitive mode of baptism. It is found Rom. vi. 4. ‘We are *buried* with him in (by) baptism into death.’ Again in Col. ii. 12. ‘*Buried* with him in baptism,’ &c.”

But what has “possessed the imagination” of so many Pædobaptists, to give the same explanation, and to agree with us, that the apostle, by the term *buried*, alluded to the mode of baptism by immersion? §

A writer who refers to “*small things*,” on a *small subject*, contained in a *small book*, may assist us on the present occasion; as *small things* often show which way the wind blows || “If any of the learned fathers,” says

\* Zech. xiii. 1. † Rev. i. 5. ‡ Rev. vii. 14.

§ Vid. Cave, Locke, Burkitt, Poole, in loc.

|| Vid. Mr Anderson's estimate of immersion, note p. 11.

this author, "have said things, in favour of baptizing by immersion, they may have been indebted for it to their reading Greek authors, more than to their critical attention to the New Testament." (Note, page 11.) What an admirable apology for men, whose professed object was, to write critical expositions on the sacred text! "Hence (continues this author) we learn why *probably* Calvin, and many others, made concessions in favour of immersion, and yet baptized by affusion. *They were honest\*\*\** As classic scholars in the Greek language they made their concessions, but as believers, taught by the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, they baptized as we do" (Page 23.)

Will Mr. Anderson's brethren thank him for this singular statement? For the premises which he has placed before us furnish us with the following conclusion, viz. That those who will not concede the same things which Calvin and many others did, that "to baptize is to immerse," are either unacquainted with the *Grecian classics*, or else that they are not *honest*! But how does Calvin's honesty appear? in his believing one thing and practising another? How? Why, in this way: as a *classic scholar*, thoroughly acquainted with Grecian literature, he was compelled to own, that "the word *baptiz* signifies to *dip*; and it is certain (adds he) that the manner of *dipping* was used by the ancient church.\*" "But as a believer, taught by the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," he could construe *baptiz* to mean pouring, or sprinkling, or any kind of wetting! But where and how does the Holy Ghost teach that new born babes should be *sprinkled*? Not in the scriptures; for many others, whose honesty can no more be scrupled than Calvin's, have confessed, that the scriptures were totally "silent;" nor by the testimony of those who were cotemporary with the apostles, for there "is nothing directly on the subject, either for or against infant baptism, in the writings of the first century." But where will this sentiment lead us, that the Holy Ghost teacheth, that words when used in the sacred scriptures, have a meaning totally different

\* Inst. Christ. Relig. l. iv. c. 15. § 19.

from what they have in common use? Will it not lead into all the devious paths of error? Is it not *Origenism* revived with a witness? and does it not establish the sentiment of that mystic writer, that "the scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they were written?"

But these men, who made concessions in favour of immersion, says Mr. Anderson, "were honest." Did he mean to suggest, that men are less honest at the present day? we should hardly suppose it; and yet there is some ground for such a suspicion. It is understood, that many plumply deny that their pious and learned ancestors freely acknowledged: not only so, but we find their works interpolated. In the first edition of Poole's exposition on John iii. 23. speaking of John's baptizing at Enon *because the e was much water there*, the writer thus expounds: "It is from this apparent, that both Christ and John baptized by *dipping the body in water*, else they needed not have sought places where had been great plenty of water: yet it is *probable*, they did not constantly dip, from what we read of the apostles' baptizing in houses." Nothing more is added upon this member of the text. Although Dr. Collins, the writer of this article, has long since been dead, yet some sacrilegious hand has dared to alter this in a late edition, printed at Edinburgh 1801, in the following manner: "It is from this apparent, *say some*," &c. "Others say it is not apparent," &c.; and several arguments are here urged, to disprove what stands decidedly in favour of immersion in the first edition. This artful interpolation we consider as a real imposition upon the public: for in this way any of the ancient writers may be made to say things which they never said, and deny things which they freely acknowledged. If such frauds are allowed to be practised, all confidence in the testimony of those who have gone before us will be destroyed.

The opposers of immersion make use of the same kind of arguments to disparage this practice, which the enemies of revelation employ against Christianity generally; we mean, by arguing from the abuse of it. One would think, by some of their representations, that



our baptismal occasions were a scene of riot and confusion; the truth is exactly the reverse of this; they are usually seasons of peculiar solemnity. We have frequent and repeated instances of persons' being struck under conviction, while witnessing the due administration of this impressive institute. But were the ridicule and opposition much greater than what we have at any time experienced, we should suppose our brethren would be the last persons in the world to complain. From whom does this opposition and ridicule proceed? Surely not from the Baptists themselves, nor from any who are friendly to them; but from . . . . . we will not say whom, though they are often well known.

It must be peculiarly grateful to the feelings of a pious Baptist, when reproached for following the example of his Lord and Master, that immersion, after sustaining every opposition which learned ingenuity can make, still maintains its indisputable claim, of being apostolic baptism. Nor will it give him the least uneasiness, that his Pædobaptist brethren can make out a bare *probability*, that water might *possibly* have been applied in some extreme cases otherways. From the evidence which the sacred scriptures, ecclesiastical history, and the testimony of the most pious and learned of the Pædobaptists exhibit, that immersion was the constant practice of the primitive church, he will feel a safety in following their example; he will rest confident, that there cannot be the same degree of evidence in favour of any other mode. This, Pædobaptists themselves acknowledge to be valid; all others are doubtful.

Though considered by our opponents as a "little modern sect,"\* if we have the truth on our side we need not fear. "They have ever been (saith Mr. Worcester) but a *very* small proportion of the Christian world. I do not mean (saith he) that they have been but a small proportion of the *nominally* Christian world, but a *very* small proportion of the *true and faithful* professing people of God." This is to us another of the mysterious unintelligible statements made by this author. It would seem by this, that the Baptists have some time

\* Dr. Osgood, page 41, and Mr. Worcester, page 66.

or other made a large proportion of the professing Christian world. But as a drawback upon this, they had a much larger proportion of *nominal* professors than fell to the share of other denominations. If it be a fact, that we have a greater proportion of *nominal* professors than Pædobaptists, we are extremely puzzled to account for it. If we baptized infants, and insisted that they were all *disciples*, although they had never learned a word concerning Jesus Christ, nor was it certain that they ever would: or if we admitted members into our churches without evidence of their having experienced a moral change, and in many instances, without asking them a single question concerning their religious exercises: or if a considerable proportion of our ministers were ordained without any *examination* respecting their particular sentiments or experimental knowledge of the truth, and who of course would be interested in keeping their hearers prejudiced against the fanaticism of experimental religion; then we might reasonably conclude that we had a larger proportion of *nominal* professors than those churches who admit only such as give a satisfactory *reason of the hope that is in them*.

It is true, indeed, we neither *make* disciples, *admit* members, nor *ordain* ministers, in this way; yet, after all our care in examining them according to the *best light we have*, we are very liable to err. Our brethren, it would seem, are not so much exposed; for, if they have not overrated themselves, “the light of *the truth* has been a *hundred*, perhaps a THOUSAND FOLD GREATER, in the Pædobaptist churches than in the Baptist.”\* *Mirabile dictu!* What an amazing difference! Who does not pity the poor benighted Baptists? Also all the piety, learning, and talents, belonging to the Christian world, our brethren claim, almost exclusively for themselves.† For all this vast superiority, we most respectfully tender them “the homage of our high consideration;” but beg them in future, not to overwhelm us with such arguments as these.

Mr. Anderson, in his zeal to make a *fair show* of eminent men in the Pædobaptist churches, has somehow

\* Mr. Andersen's Lett. p. 14. † Vid. Mr. Worcester's Disc. p. 62.

slipped in among them the author of the *PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*.\* Bunyan, though a Baptist, we suppose it will be allowed was one of the *good sort*, for he held to open communion. This being the case, how came the Pædobaptists to persecute and imprison him? Was it for any immoral conduct that he was consigned to a loathsome jail twelve years and a half? The reader, perhaps, could judge better, if he were to know the crime that was laid to his charge. The bill of indictment preferred against him runs thus: "*John Bunyan—bath devilishly abstained from coming to church, to hear divine service; and is a common upholder of several unlawful meetings and conventicles, to the disturbance and distraction of the good subjects of this kingdom, contrary to the laws of our sovereign lord the king.*"\* For thus daring to preach the gospel, contrary to the laws of a tyrannical hierarchy, this good man was sent to prison for twelve years and six months!

It has often been urged, as an argument in favour of the divinity of the Christian religion, that it made its way at first against the *learning, power and policy* of the world, by the instrumentality of a few *illiterate fishermen*! Does not this argument cast its full weight into the scale, in favour of our distinguishing sentiments, if the observations of our brethren respecting us be just? Let the candid mind decide. May the Lord preserve us from becoming vain by prosperity. We have great reason to adore our Saviour God, that our duty is made so plain in his blessed word; that we have such abundant proof that we are *treading in the footsteps of the flock*, and are followers of them who through faith and patience are gone to inherit the promises.

Notwithstanding our practice of immersion, which "is deemed indecorous by most people accustomed to polished manners," and " denial of the external rite of baptism to the infant seed of believers;" yet, if it were not for our "antichristian practice of close communion," it seems that our brethren could receive and treat us as Christians. We therefore add a few observations on *free communion* before we close.

\* Lett. p. 23.

† Notes on Claude vol. ii. p. 228.

## SECTION VIII.

*The Principles of Open Communion examined—The Subject concluded.*

IS the communion for which our brethren plead, limited, or unlimited? If limited, we wish to be informed what are its boundaries. If unlimited, then it must, we conceive, embrace all who bear the Christian name. "In these United States (saith a respectable writer) there are probably more than six millions of people *wearing the Christian name.*"\* Is open communion charitable enough to embrace all these? No, surely; the thought is too extravagant to be seriously entertained. A considerable proportion of these, have no other connexion with Christianity, than only as it is the religion of the country in which they happened to be born. However, they are all brought forward, and each *counts one* against the Baptists.†

But to say no more of this. If we open our doors for free communion, must we not, to act consistently, receive all whose right of membership can be supported? If so, must we not commune with all the baptized children which belong to Pædobaptist congregations? Our brethren place the right of their infants on the same footing with their own; therefore, if their argument be good, if we receive them, we must receive their children also. Should we admit the believing parents, and refuse their baptized children, might they not still continue the dreadful charge, that we "deny God's everlasting covenant of superabounding grace, the grand charter of the inheritance and privileges" of their infant seed? We see nothing to forbid. But it may be said, this is more than they practise themselves; and therefore, it would not be expected of the Baptists. We grant that they do not practise it; and on that account we think them extremely inconsistent. In contending with us, they strenuously insist upon the right of their infants to membership, and yet themselves deny them the most

\* Dr. Osgood, Disc. p. 41. † Ibid.

essential privileges which every member has a right to enjoy !

But should we give up this idea, and narrow the field of free communion, so as to include only such as are actual members of Pædobaptist churches ; we should still wish to inquire, whether it would be expected, that we should commune with all of them, whether Calvinists, Arminians, Semi-Arians, Socinians, or Unitarians ? If not, where are we to fix the discriminating line ? Do the strict Calvinistic or Hopkintian churches commune with those whom they consider as Arminians, or Semi-Arians ? If not, do they not practise close communion as well as the Baptists ? Do those churches which require of every person in order to membership, either a verbal or written declaration of their experience of a work of grace upon their hearts, hold communion with those churches which require no such experience, and which believe nothing in such a work ? If they do not, are they not inconsistent to blame us for our particular communion ? If they do, are they not still *more* inconsistent ?

With a view to relieve these difficulties, some have stated the plan of free communion in this way :—That we should hold communion with all such, and with such only, as we conscientiously believe to be real Christians ; God's own dear children by the Spirit of adoption and a living faith. This is indeed by far the most consistent plan ; but even this is attended with some serious difficulties. It is believed that in all Christian communities there may be found some of the above description. *There were even in Sardis a few names which had not defiled their garments,* though living in a church which had most awfully apostatized from the truth. On this principle we might freely commune with one member, and reject another at the same time, whose standing was equally good in the church to which they belonged. But what heart-burning and confusion this would produce ; and yet it might be unavoidable in many cases.

The fact is, we conceive, that there is but one consistent method, by which occasional communion can be practised between the members of sister churches. This



is not upon the principle of individual, but of *church fellowship*. If we could receive one member of a church, by the same rule we could receive every member of the same church. We do not know the precise order in which our Pædobaptist brethren proceed; but think it the general practice in our churches, that when a brother, who is a stranger, requests occasional communion, if by a certificate (or otherwise) he can satisfy us, that he is a member in regular standing, in any church of the same *faith and order* with ourselves, he is readily admitted. The only evidence which we have of the man in this case is, from the character of the church of which he is a member. We imagine the practice of our brethren is not very dissimilar.

There are some Pædobaptist churches which appear to be built of *lively stones*, and where the truths of the gospel in general are preached, and a good degree of discipline maintained. With these we have no material difficulty, excepting in the article of baptism. We could most cheerfully unite with them in every act of Christian duty, which would not in our view contravene some other part of the revealed will of Christ. In the article of communion, we feel bound to treat them just as we do our own members, after they are received into our fellowship, but not baptized. Should we treat them as baptized persons, would they not with great propriety charge us with our inconsistency?

There are other churches, with which we freely acknowledge we could not commune, if we had no objections to their baptism. It is not because we do not think them respectable members of society, but because we have no evidence that they are real Christians. We have no doubt but in *these* communities, there may be some sincere believers; but where a change of heart is not considered as a necessary qualification for membership, there is always a high probability, that a large proportion of the members are unacquainted with the truth as it is in Jesus. On the whole, we see no way that looks more consistent than our present practice. From all the evidence which has been set before us, we cannot bring ourselves to believe that any thing is

baptism short of immersion. Nor can we see our way clear to invite any to the communion table until they have been baptized.

But why is it thought so important, that different denominations should be agreed in the article of table-communion, more than in other things? Is it any more essential to salvation, that we commune together at the Lord's table, than that we should be rightly baptized? For ourselves, we believe neither of them essential to salvation. We are hence unable to discern, why our refusing to admit the Pædobaptists to communicate with us, should injure their churches, any more than their not admitting us should injure our's.

Our brethren charge us with laying an undue stress upon baptism; at least upon a particular mode of it. But their arguments have been insufficient to produce conviction. On the other hand, we think they lay an undue stress on our communicating together at the Lord's table. Ritual duties, they have constantly insisted, were to be classed among the *non-essentials* of religion. How then shall we reconcile the conduct of those ministers and churches, who profess to hold the doctrine of sovereign discriminating grace, and yet unite with others, who hold every grade of doctrine, down to *Socinianism*, merely because they are agreed in the article of infant baptism? At the same time, they reject all kind of connexion with their Baptist brethren, who believe and preach the same important truths which they profess to believe. Nay, do they not in some instances, warn their people to shun them as they would the pestilence?

Our pulpits have been generally open to all evangelic ministers, whether they have been *buried in baptism*, or only sprinkled; and we rather think they will still remain so. Some of our brethren, in return, invite us into their's; while others very conscientiously refuse, assigning as a reason, their fears, that it would have a tendency to make a division among their people. Did we differ in points of doctrine, the objection would have weight, but now it is of little force. We do not believe that an instance can be named, in which any have

preached upon their distinguishing sentiments, when in each others' pulpits. Where then is the mighty danger? No where but in imagination. We have never apprehended any danger, from their preaching the truth to our people.

Nor are we conscious of feeling, or displaying, that rage for proselyting, which our opponents charge us with. "Each individual, (says Dr. Olgood) whom they can *persuade* to renounce his former baptism, by being thus baptized over again, they consider as being recovered from a state of heathenism." (P. 10.) We think the Doctor would have spoken more correctly, if he had said, "They baptize all such as we *cannot persuade* to keep out of the water." Whenever a person renounces Pædobaptism, and comes over to the Baptists, it is immediately said, "Somebody has been *persuading* him." So far is this from being true generally, that we have reason to fear that the dread of being accused of proselyting, has, in too many instances, kept us from fully declaring this part of the *counsel of God*. We appeal to Pædobaptist ministers to say, whether they have not, (many of them at least) had repeatedly to use all the arts of *persuasion* to keep their people from being Baptists? If there be nothing in the Bible which looks with a favourable aspect upon the Baptist sentiment, we ask, how it happens that so many Pædobaptist ministers have confessed, that at some former period of their lives, (though through mercy they are now well established) they had strong doubts respecting their infant baptism? What but the bible persuaded Mr. Dunster, the first President of Harvard University, to embrace the Baptist sentiments? Surely he could not have been *persuaded* by the Baptists; for at this time they were scarcely allowed to breathe the air of Massachusetts. It is said, "he thought himself under obligation, to bear his testimony in some sermons, against the administration of baptism to any infants whatsoever."\* What his temerity cost him, the author of the History of Massachusetts will inform us. Speaking of the rise of Antipædobaptism in the province, he says, "Mr. Dunster, the President of the Col-

\* Mitchel's Life, p. 67, in Backus.

lege, made profession of it, and was forced to quit his presidentship." To which he adds, "Mr. Chauncy, his successor, held immersion necessary, but was content that the ordinance should be administered to infants, provided it was done in that way." He further remarks, that "in Mr. Hooker's time, soon after the year 1640; it appears by his letters, that many were *inclined that way*, and he expresses his apprehensions, that the number would increase."\* Whether his apprehensions were excited by a prophetic spirit, we pretend not to say; but they appear to have been well founded. We wish, in future, whenever the sons of *Harvard* are disposed to treat the advocates of immersion as being destitute of literary patronage, they may remember, that their two first Presidents understood baptism, as we do, to mean IMMERSION.

The preceding remarks contain some of our difficulties respecting the plan of free communion. To us, the standing of many churches at the present day, appears to be similar to those of Asia, to which John was directed to write. Although they were not disowned of God, yet the most of them were reprov'd for having departed from their original purity.

There are many individuals in the different communities with whom we could most cheerfully communicate at the Lord's table, did we believe them to be baptized. But their arguments in favour of their practice do not satisfy us, and we cannot see how they can satisfy them. To acknowledge that the scriptures are our "*only rule of faith and practice*," and then proceed to argue from their *silence*, looks to us as inconsistent, as to admit the testimony of the guard, who reported that the disciples of Jesus stole him away while they slept.

When the mode of our obedience to a positive institute, (instead of better ground) resorts to this, that "there is absolutely no text or sentence in the Bible forbidding it :"<sup>†</sup> or, that "there is nothing in the scriptures against it :"<sup>†</sup> it establishes to us one point, and one only, that is, that the cause which requires it

\* Hutch. Hist. Mass. p. 229.

† Dr. Osgood, p. 49. Mr. Worcester, p. 69.

labours exceedingly. The reader will contrast the following observations with the above.

“Religion, (said the excellent Claude) in *all its parts*, ought to proceed from God : for as he has not left it to the choice of man to have or not have a religion ; so neither has he left it to his *fancy to invent* such a worship as he chooses.”\* An old English divine says, “We must have God’s warrant for God’s worship. St. Paul proves, that the tribe of Judah had nothing to do with Aaron’s priesthood, from the *silence* of Moses ; *of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.*” He reasons as follows : “God employed Moses to reveal his will to the Jews. Moses spake nothing of Judah’s priesthood. Therefore God would not, have that tribe officiate in the priest’s office. What God would have his church practise, since the abolition of Judaism, he has revealed by Christ and his apostles. The apostles have *registered these appointments in the scriptures.*”† It hence appears, that St. Paul considered the *silence* of the scriptures, in a light exactly opposite to what our brethren do. He argued from it, that what was not written was implicitly forbidden. They argue, that what is not forbidden, may lawfully be practised.

We oppose infant baptism because we do not believe it to be divine. If it be an apostolic tradition, it is an unwritten one. We baptize believers, because we have positive scripture proof that they were baptized in the days of Christ and the apostles. We practise immersion, because to us it appears exceedingly plain from the scriptures that John the Baptist, who was sent from God to introduce this new dispensation, baptized in Jordan ; and in Enon because there was *much water*. The *much water* is mentioned, as necessary to his baptizing, and to nothing else. We also believe that Jesus our Lord and Saviour was plunged in Jordan. We further believe that this was the only way in which the apostles received and administered the ordinance.

Jesus first *made disciples*, and then baptized them. The commission which he gave to teach and baptize, corresponds with his own practice. “The order runs

\* Disc. on a Ser. vol. i. p. 216.

† Gouge on the viith. of Hebrews.



thus, *Teach all nations baptizing them.* The thing speaks for itself; the style is popular; the sense plain: it must mean either—baptize whole nations, or such of all nations as receive your instructions, and desire to be baptized. The first is too gross to be admitted, because it cannot be effected without force; and the grossness of the one instantly turns the mind to the other, the plain and true sense. In the principles of the kingdom of Christ there is neither *fraud* nor *force*; nor is it suitable to the dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, to take one man by *conviction*, and his ten children by *surprise*.\* Bishop Beveridge, with many others, have tried to make out, that the Greek word (*matbeteusate*) to teach, or make disciples, would admit of making them without teaching. “But I believe (said a very correct writer) it would puzzle a whole conclave of Jesuits, to make a *disciple* of Christ, or a *Christian*, without *teaching*.” Collecting our ideas of a *disciple* from the New Testament, and we are at once led to a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. These disciples all desire the *sincere milk of the WORD*; but those “little disciples” desire no higher nourishment than what a good healthy *nurse* can afford them. But it is said, “they are entered into Christ’s school, and destined to learn.”† Indeed!—But do men enter their children as scholars as soon as they are born, because they intend to send them to school, should they live to be four or five years old? A man may be supposed to form an intention, soon after the birth of a son, to bring him up at college; but would he not be thought a madman, should he attempt to enter him as soon as he was born, or before he was fitted, or was even capable of receiving the lowest degree of instruction? We will only say, *we have not so learned Christ.*

Notwithstanding we oppose with some degree of zeal what we look upon to be error in our brethren, yet we rejoice whenever we hear or see the work of God among them. Concerned as we are, that the ordinances should be kept pure, as they were delivered by the apostles, it is still a minor consideration. Our first and great concern is, that men be made Christians.

\* Robinson.

† Dr. Osgood’s Disc. p. 72.

We have no idea that baptism in any mode will make Christians, either of infants or adults.\*

We baptize such as have been sprinkled in their infancy, when they desire it of us, provided they can satisfy us that they are fit subjects; because we think with *Tertullian*, "that he that is not rightly baptized, is doubtless not baptized at all." Such as have been baptized, that is, immersed, upon a profession of faith, by Pædobaptists, we do not re-baptize: but if they have only been sprinkled, though adults, when they come over to us, we baptize them.† Infant baptism to us is defective, both in the *subject* and *mode*, and has a tendency to defeat the design of the ordinance, which was intended to be a significant sign of faith in Christ.

If baptizing such as have not been rightly baptized be *anabaptism*, then there were hundreds and thousands long before the *madmen* of Munster (as their enemies are pleased to call them) in 1522. Besides many individuals from Tertullian down to the Reformation, were there not large sects, such as the Donatists, in the fourth century, the Paulicians, in the seventh, eighth and ninth, the Waldenses in the eleventh, who baptized such as came over to them from other sects? Dr. Mosheim allows, that "the origin of the sect is hid in

\* The question was once asked one of the Paulianists (an ancient sect,) "Why do you not baptize your son, to expel the devil out of him? Oh, answered he, no water can wash the devil out of the child. Monster! said the other, you deny baptism and the influence of the Holy Ghost." Monstrous absurdity!

† Mr. Worcester seems to be much disturbed at the proceedings of the Baptists at Sedgwick, for administering baptism, forming a church, &c. "Thus (says he) in the face of the world, was the great body of our churches and ministers, &c. *deliberately* set at naught. This has been widely, and with great exultation, spread abroad by the Anti-pædobaptists." And would not the Pædobaptists "exult" a little, if a Baptist minister, his wife, three deacons, and eighty others, should all come over to them at once? Has not the defection of Mr. Edwards from our sentiments, been a theme of as much "exultation" among them? Has not a solitary instance of a Mrs. Jackson, in the State of Vermont, been conveyed to Boston, and attached to several publications, and vast pains taken to spread it? Not only so, but has not an instance of one, who by the "overwhelming attentions of the Baptists," had *like to have been one*, but mercifully escaped, been widely proclaimed abroad? Vid. the lucubrations of a *petticoat priest*, over the signature of LYDIA, in the Mass. Miss. Mag.

the remotest depths of antiquity ;" that they "started up all of a sudden in several countries, at the same point of time, under different leaders, at the *very period* when the first contest of the reformers with the Roman pontiffs drew the attention of the world," &c.

But having far exceeded our proposed limits, we hasten to close the subject with a few words of address.



### To the Pædobaptists.

**BELoved BRETHREN**—When you cast your eyes upon the Baptist churches, you behold a people *spread abroad*, who have risen from a handful to a great multitude. Like the primitive church, they have had to encounter all the prejudices of the learned and of the ignorant. As they have never been aided by civil power, their progress must be attributed to some other cause. We beseech you candidly to weigh the evidence exhibited in the preceding work, and compare it with that by which you support your own sentiments; and may the Lord help you to know and do his will.

### To the Baptists.

**BELoved BRETHREN**—*Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.* From the days of your persecuted ancestor, who was obliged to cross the Patucket, to enjoy among savages those rights of conscience, which had been denied him by Christians, your history exhibits repeated instances of *cruel mockings*, and of the *spoiling of your goods*, and some of *bonds and imprisonment*. The American revolution has meliorated your condition. Truth must prevail. Its progress will naturally be more rapid, when not impeded by religious establishments, and penal laws.

We beseech you, brethren, as *pilgrims and strangers*, to adorn your profession, by a holy, humble walk. The progress of your principles, and increase of your churches (under God) depends not less upon the unblameableness of your lives, than upon the purity of your sentiments. If your brethren hate you, and cast you out for his name's sake, requite them only with kindness. In this way you will *put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*. The present period is auspicious: O for wisdom to improve it. See that you fall not out by the way. Finally, brethren, *we beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

FINIS.



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